

The Palestinian Strategic Report

2009/10



Edited By

Dr. Mohsen M. Saleh



Al-Zaytouna Centre For Studies & Consultations

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10



**Al-Zaytouna Centre
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List of Abbreviations

ARIJ	Applied Research Institute—Jerusalem
CBR	Crude Birth Rate
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CDR	Crude Death Rate
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DFLP	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
EC	European Commission
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EU	European Union
EUNIDA	European Network of Implementing Development Agencies
Fatah	Palestinian National Liberation Movement
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GERRP	Gaza Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan
GS	Gaza Strip
Hamas	Islamic Resistance Movement
HRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IAA	Israel Antiquities Authority
ICHR	The Independent Commission for Human Rights
ILA	Israel Lands Administration
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISESCO	Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
JDA	Jerusalem Development Authority
JNF	Jewish National Fund
JWC	Joint Water Committee
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MCM	Million Cubic Meters
MK	Member of Knesset
MOTJ	Museum of Tolerance Jerusalem
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OCHA-oPt	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-occupied Palestinian territory

OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
PA	Palestinian Authority
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PCHR	Palestinian Centre for Human Rights
PECDAR	Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction
PEGASE	Palestino-Européen de Gestion et d'Aide Socio-Economique
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PFLP-GC	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command
PHC	Statistics of the Population, Housing and Establishment Census
PIC	The Palestinian Information Center
PIJ	Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PMA	Palestine Monetary Authority
PNC	Palestinian National Council
PPSF	Palestinian Popular Struggle Front
PRC	Palestinian Return Centre
PRDP	Palestinian Reform and Development Plan
PSS	Preventive Security Service
PWA	Palestinian Water Authority
Shabak	Israel Security Agency
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UK	United Kingdom
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
US/ USA	United States of America
WB	West Bank
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

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Introduction

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10 is the fifth in the series of annual reports issued by al-Zaytouna Centre. It is now considered an essential reference among the Palestinian studies' references. The *Report* discusses the annual developments in the Palestinian issue in a comprehensive, scientific and objective manner. It offers the reader the latest information accompanied with precise up-to-date statistics, within an analytical reading and in a futuristic approach.

In 2009, the steadfastness of the Palestinian resistance in confronting the Israeli aggression on Gaza Strip (27/12/2008–18/1/2009), gave the Palestinian people a big morale boost. It also encouraged the resumption of the national Palestinian reconciliation talks. Alas, the glow of this steadfastness was soon absorbed by the Palestinian-Arab-international environment incapable of investing in it. This happened at a time while the siege continued, alongside with the destruction of war. Hence, the wounds of Gazans were left to bleed and rot.

Despite the long rounds of national dialogue, and the intensive Egyptian efforts, during 2009, to reach national reconciliation, and despite the fact that this dialogue has gone a long way on its five various tracks connected to national reconciliation, security, PLO, caretaker government and the elections; the year 2009 ended without signing an agreement.

The year 2010 began with the national Palestinian efforts still suffering from rifts and schisms. It suffers also expired or partial legitimacies of the representative and leading Palestinian organizations, in addition to the contradictory work of the conflicting parties that usually leads to a zero summation, if not a negative one. The Palestinian political track is still lost between the choices of a peace settlement and military resistance, and on how to handle the relations with Israel, the Arabs and the international community. The Palestinian decision-making process is still suffering from the negative foreign interference, that can't be overcome except by placing the higher national interests and priorities of the Palestinian people ahead of any external pressure.

The year 2009 and also 2010, haven't achieved any substantial development whether on the level of reconciliation, unity or any Palestinian national accomplishments. Whereas the Israelis succeeded in eluding the peace settlement requirements and American pressure. Israel has continued its dangerous and active agenda of Judaizing Jerusalem, expanding settlements and imposing facts on the ground. While the impotence of the official Palestinian, Arab and Islamic leadership in addition to the international community have tempted Israel to go unrestricted in its siege, aggression and Judaization.

Fourteen professors and researchers specialized in the Palestinian studies have contributed to this *Report*. It discusses in eight chapters the internal Palestinian conditions, the Israeli-Palestinian scene and its intricacies, the Palestinian issue from an Arab, Islamic, and international perspectives, the Palestinian demographic and economic conditions, in addition to shedding light on Jerusalem, the holy sites and the suffering of land and man under the Israeli occupation.

We acknowledge with gratitude the efforts of the consultants of the *Report*, whose remarks played an important role in enhancing academic work of the *Report*. Al-Zaytouna Centre welcomes its two dear colleagues Dr. Majdi Hammad and Dr. Hussein Abu al-Namel to the team of the *Report's* consultants. Al-Zaytouna also extends its gratitude to all its staff, co-editors and archive department team, who made outstanding efforts to deliver this *Report* in its known standards.

Al-Zaytouna Centre and *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10* have lost one of its distinguished supporters and consultants, Prof. Dr. Anis Sayigh. He was one of the most renowned scholars in Palestinian studies and a consultant for the *Report* for the last four consecutive years. Al-Zaytouna Centre also suffered the loss of one of the eminent members of its board of consultants, the distinguished historian, Prof. Dr. Mohammed 'Eisa Salhieh, whose support, researches and consultations enriched the Centre. The Centre also lost Mr. Shafiq al-Hout, a leader of the Palestinian national movement and the former representative of the PLO in Lebanon, and Dr. Kamal Midhat, the legal expert, a Fatah leader and the deputy representative of PLO in Lebanon. They both stood by the Centre with their advice, encouragement and participation in its activities. It is truly hard to replace such scientific and national scholars. We find our consolation in our determinism to continue in their footsteps, trying to produce the serious scientific research that would serve the pressing issues of our countries and nation.

It is noteworthy to mention that this English version is issued as *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10*, although the original Arabic version did not include in its title the year 2010. It must be explained that this *Report* covers parts of the events of 2010 and that some more information and details were added in this English version. However, the core of discussion and analysis was still focusing in 2009.

In the end, we are very much pleased with the success and the good response that the *Report* is getting. We thank all those who support it and encouraged its continuation, and those who helped us with the critique, advice and guidance.

**The Editor,
Dr. Mohsen Saleh**

Chapter One

The Internal Palestinian Scene

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Introduction

The Palestinian scene had experienced intensive activity during 2009 that was represented by various developments and actions: the war on Gaza Strip (GS) and its repercussions, the endless Palestinian reconciliation rounds under Egyptian patronage, the drive of Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah) and Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) to put their houses in order and the American strife to achieve a breakthrough in the peace negotiations. But all these events did not have a tangible impact on the totality and reality of the situation, nor did they change the existing and continuing state of stagnation in the Palestinian domestic scene. Palestinian schism and disarray continued and no effective reconciliation was arrived at to shake up the fundamental issues, particularly those related to the desire to put the Palestinian house in order and to fix its priorities, including the restructuring and reform of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the formation of a national consensus government and the reformation of the security forces and the electoral law and procedures, etc. As for 2010, the state of stagnation continued, despite some breakthroughs that have occurred in the negotiations between Fatah and Hamas delegations in Damascus, in October and November of 2010.

The Palestinian internal schism and the “brothers’ misery” continued to have adverse impact on the totality of the national Palestinian plan, locally and on the Arab and international levels. The incomplete legitimacies and contradictory moves had paralysed the Palestinian struggle and rendered it practically ineffective.

First: The Caretaker Government in Ramallah

Salam Fayyad managed to retain throughout 2009 and 2010 his caretaker government and premiership, notwithstanding his insignificant two-member parliamentary group out of the 132 members of parliaments of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), Hamas’ non-recognition of his government, and the

brutal criticism lodged by some senior leaders of Fatah and other factions against his performance and the performance of his government.

Fayyad was lucky to be favored in person by Mahmud ‘Abbas (Abu Mazin) and the international community, and to have benefited from two developments that gave his government the chance to fill the constitutional vacuum in Ramallah; namely, the suspension the PLC, where Hamas is the dominant faction, and its inability to convene, and the failure of the rounds of talks to lead to a government of national consensus. Though he initially submitted his resignation to President ‘Abbas on 7/3/2009, but continued to run the affairs of the government pending the formation of the expected consensus government. On 19/5/2009, Fayyad took the constitutional oath as the prime minister of the new government, which he formed.

Three factors that leveraged the ability of Fayyad’s government to be in control:

1. Relative stable security.
2. Relative economic improvement compared to the misery of GS that has been paralyzed by the siege and destruction.
3. The support of Fatah leadership, the Arabs and the Americans, besides the Israeli “satisfaction.”

However, five other factors had negatively affected the performance of Fayyad’s government:

1. Its poor performance during the Israeli war on GS.
2. The demand to postpone the vote on the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict; the mission that was headed by the Jewish South African Justice Richard Goldstone.
3. The effective security coordination with the Israelis and the Americans, and the chase of resistance activists and their arrest.
4. The stalemate in the negotiations and the peace process, and lack of genuine alternatives to pressure Israel.
5. The continuation of Israeli settlements and Judaization operations, and the Israeli attacks on holy places in the West Bank (WB).

The resumption of the national dialogue and the drive for reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas after the end of the Israeli war on Gaza on 18/1/2009 was expected to corner Fayyad, hence the premier placed his government—during the meeting of the Executive Committee of the PLO of 22/1/2009—at Mahmud ‘Abbas’ disposal.¹ After the beginning of the national dialogue in Cairo, Fayyad

submitted the resignation of his government on 7/3/2009, which, according to a press release issued by his office, would be effective “immediately upon formation of the government of national consensus, probably by the end of the month at the latest.” ‘Abbas accepted Fayyad’s resignation, which, he said, had been undertaken to “usher the Palestinian dialogue and to support it, and to push the Palestinian dialogue forward to form a government [new one].” ‘Abbas asked Fayyad to continue to administer the affairs of the government until the formation of a new government. He, moreover, commended the “achievements” of Fayyad’s government, especially in the areas of “security, finance and reform.”²

Though Fayyad had officially declared that he will not take up an official post, including the premiership of the government of national consensus,³ some informed circles maintained that he, supported by the Americans, had an eye on the job. According to some Fatah sources close to Mahmud ‘Abbas, the latter insisted to nominate Fayyad to the premiership, though a high powered delegation of Fatah’s Executive Committee and the Revolutionary Council asked the President to forgo him in the new government.⁴

However, with the stumbling of the national dialogue and the extension of its sessions, ‘Abbas decided on 8/5/2009 to ask Fayyad to form the new government. The rationale that he gave for this decision was to secure the flow of cash to the Palestinian Authority (PA) from the donor-states, which they were reportedly about to suspend under the pretension that there is no government to deal with.⁵ One really wonders if a mere indirect remark that the financial aid may be stopped or delayed would have hastily lead to confirm Fayyad in the premiership, what would have been the case if Hamas itself was a partner in the government or assuming its leadership?

The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) declined to participate in Fayyad’s government because it wanted to have a government of national consensus.⁶ However, Fayyad’s government was finally formed of 24 ministers, most of them technocrats and half the members of the government were of the Fatah movement. Of the other ministers were the Minister of Social Affairs Majida al-Masri of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), the Minister of Culture Siham al-Barghouthi of the Palestinian Democratic Union (Fida), the Minister of Labor Ahmad Majdalani of the Palestinian Popular Struggle Front (PPSF), the Minister of Agriculture Isma’il Du‘eiq and the Minister of Economy Bassem

Khoury, Chairman of the Federation of Industries. The formation of this government provoked the protest of Fatah parliamentary bloc, which argued that Fayyad did not consult it. It, furthermore, asked two of its ministerial candidates, 'Issa Qaraqe' and Rabiha Diab, who were respectively offered the portfolios of the Detainees' Affairs and Women's Affairs, to decline the offers, and they actually absented themselves during the constitutional oath.⁷ But by the end of the day 'Abbas imposed his will on Fatah, sternly telling the Head of its parliamentary bloc 'Azzam al-Ahmad that this government is his government, and that he does not tolerate any obstruction whatsoever to its functions.⁸ Nonetheless, several of Fatah leaders reluctantly dealt with Fayyad, and some weeks later one of Fatah's leaders and Minister of Jerusalem Affairs Hatem 'Abdul Qader, resigned in protest of the government's lack of support to his ministry, though he insisted to continue to be in charge of Jerusalem affairs in Fatah, and Fayyad accepted his resignation on 8/7/2009.⁹

Hamas opposed Fayyad's government because, according to Hamas, it undermines the drive to form a government of national consensus. Ahmad Bahr, a top Hamas leader, and the acting speaker of the PLC, offered the following comment, "Fayyad's government is illegitimate, and which was formed under an illegitimate president." He added that the formation of this government without seeking the approval of the PLC is an "another indication of lack of sincerity towards the Palestinian dialogue in Cairo."¹⁰

Salam Fayyad emphasized that his government is a transitional government that will continue in power until the formation of a government of national consensus, and enumerated its priorities in the following: Internally, reconstructing GS and securing \$240 million* monthly to finance the PA, while politically it will call for halting Israeli settlement construction, stopping the invasions of Palestinian territories and lifting the blockade.¹¹ Fayyad also emphasized that the political program of his government is that of Mahmud 'Abbas and the PLO.¹²

The title of Fayyad's government plan was "Palestine: Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State," It took two months to finalize and was declared on 25/8/2009, and it was expected to be executed within the next two years.¹³ The plan included the construction of major projects like an airport, railways, and basic infrastructure. It aimed to secure the sources of power and water, elevate the standards of housing, education, health and other social and cultural services, improve the agriculture,

* The term \$ used throughout this book is the US\$.

create an enabling investment environment, and promote the professional and effective performance of the security establishment.¹⁴ In response to the criticism that his plan is in line with the repeated call of Benjamin Netanyahu for “Economic Peace” and with the so-called comfort under the occupation, Fayyad maintained that it is a national and integrated developmental plan to end the occupation, and not to consolidate it. Fayyad also dismissed the protest of some Fatah circles that he is assuming a role that is not his as the setting up of the state’s program is an absolute prerogative of President Mahmud ‘Abbas by saying that the plan as well as the government are those of the President, and that he handed the former to Mahmud ‘Abbas two weeks before its announcement.¹⁵

The pragmatic Salam Fayyad wanted to make utmost use of the available resources, and to confront the realities that the Israelis are imposing on the ground. He tried to achieve what he considered to be essential projects that support the establishment of the Palestinian state or, at least, the steadfastness of the Palestinian people in their land. He decided to patronize the peace option, and to strictly implement the provisions of the Road Map. But Fayyad faced a manipulating Israeli side that worked for endless peace negotiations, while it continued to persistently implement large scale projects to Judaize Jerusalem and the rest of the WB, and to settle, on its own terms, the final issues well before the end of the negotiations on them. Fayyad, who has no means whatsoever to exercise pressure on the Israeli side, would, meanwhile, do what the Israelis looked for, namely “to implement the Authority’s obligations to suppress the resistance movements.” Thus, by the end of the day what Fayyad achieves will be trivial compared to what the Israelis do on the ground.

Fayyad actively focused and concentrated on the economy, and on the implementation of the occupation’s security requirements. In an interview with the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, Fayyad said that he prefers “to talk about economic issues rather than politics,” and that “his purpose is to prove to the world that the Palestinians can run a state no worse than anyone else.” Fayyad admitted that he was aware that he would be accused of being a subcontractor for the Israeli security forces, Fayyad says he decided that it was imperative to open a new era and persuade his people that building up a security force was first of all for their own safety and their children’s. “I realized that security was the glue between a thriving economy and proper government and achieving liberty for the Palestinian people,” he says.¹⁶

However, the Israeli defiant practices had placed Fayyad's government in an embarrassing situation, particularly the infiltrations and assassinations undertaken by the occupation forces in the territories of the PA, which had sometimes targeted some of Fatah's activists. For example, the assassination of three of them in Nablus on 26/12/2009, which impelled Fayyad's government to say, "We would not be dragged into a circle of violence, chaos and instability," and it also urged to observe absolute restraint and to determinedly and strongly maintain calm.¹⁷

Fayyad's government patronized the coordination and supervision of the issue of reconstruction of GS on the assumption that it is the legitimate government, and refused any direct cooperation or coordination in this respect with the government of Isma'il Haniyyah. Hence, it prepared a plan for the reconstruction to the donors' conference in Sharm el-Sheikh on 2/3/2009, who pledged around \$4.5 billion for reconstruction.¹⁸ But the continuation of the Palestinian schism, lack of coordination between the two governments and the suffocating blockade deprived the people of GS from the fruits of these allocations.

Meanwhile, the government of Fayyad continued financial transfers to cover the salaries of many educational and health sectors in GS, and the cost of some essential services like water and electricity. Fayyad claimed that his government sends \$120 million to GS each month, i.e., half of the PA's budget.¹⁹ A large sector of this fund went to the pro-Authority officials, who did not go to work on the instruction of Ramallah or because they were afraid to go lest their salaries be suspended.²⁰ This is an odd and tragic outcome of the Palestinian schism and the conflict between the governments of Ramallah and GS, which means that a large sum of these funds was politically employed in favor of the PA in Ramallah.

Second: The Caretaker Government in GS

In line with the Basic Law of the PA, the arguably legitimate caretaker government of Isma'il Haniyyah continued to administer GS. But it suffered from isolation and a tight Israeli, Arab and international siege, whereby most countries preferred to conduct official business with President 'Abbas and Fayyad's government in Ramallah.

Haniyyah's government, which is supported by Hamas, worked amidst almost impossible conditions, and it swimed against the tide in an antagonistic, hostile or just indifferent Arab environment. It believed that this siege and aggression does not only aim at ousting it from power, but essentially to uproot it and decisively strike the resistance trend and marginalize it in order to prepare the ground for the imposition of the Israeli-American will on the Palestinian people, and to emphasize the disrespect to their democratic options. Thus, Haniyyah's government felt that its steadfastness deserves all this hardship. If at all forced to choose between "bread and dignity," it would willingly choose the latter.

Haniyyah's government managed to firmly confront the Israeli war on GS (27/12/2008–18/1/2009). With the support of the resistance factions that it spearheaded, this government failed the aggression, and compelled the Israeli forces to completely evacuate the GS. Having quickly absorbed the shock of the war, Haniyyah's government continued its administration and dominance in GS, and the chaos and insecurity that some had betted on did not take place. The steadfastness and bravery of the resistance was a popular, political and media boost to the dismissed government and to Hamas. Conversely, the demoralized enemies and adversaries of Hamas had by now seriously doubted the possibility of overthrowing Haniyyah's government by force. This constituted an impetus to pursue national dialogue to achieve the Palestinian reconciliation.

The destruction inflicted on GS was massive, it included the headquarters of most of the ministries and those of the official and security institutions. But Haniyyah's government continued to offer direct services from substitute headquarters. It distributed €27 million (about \$38 million) to the victims of the war, including 13,847 citizens whose houses were partially or totally destroyed, as well as the wounded and the families of the killed.²¹ Urgent aid was extended to the families of each dead and wounded, respectively one thousand euros (about \$1,400) and €500 (about \$700), and to the owners of each destroyed house four thousand euros (approximately \$5,625).

The dismissed government estimated the cost of reconstruction as \$2.215 billion, insisted that it would be in charge of the operation and refused to allow Fayyad's government to have any direct supervision on it.²² However, the government raised no objection that the donors themselves, or their chosen companies, undertake the reconstruction, took the necessity measures to open the borders to import all that is needed for the operation, and expressed its willingness to give all the required

guarantees on the expenditure of the funds on the specified projects and according to the standards of transparency that the donors may wish. Though Haniyyah's government was completely and on the ground in charge of GS, the donors insisted to deal with President 'Abbas and Fayyad's government on this and other issues. Moreover, they strictly observed the Israeli conditions, which, in effect, meant the continuation of the blockade and destruction, and the inability to deliver the aid and to implement the projects.

Haniyyah's government formed the "Supreme National Relief Committee" to coordinate and supervise the relief efforts. But Fatah, PFLP and DFLP refused to join it because of its official character, while The Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine (PIJ) and some minor factions joined.²³

While welcoming Sharm el-Sheikh and other conferences on the reconstruction, the dismissed government maintained that the organizers approached the wrong side, i.e., Fayyad's government. In the view of Haniyyah and his colleagues, it does not represent the Palestinian people; rather, it speaks for America and the international community.²⁴

Nonetheless, notwithstanding the tremendous misery resulting from the siege and destruction, the government of Haniyyah managed to be in charge throughout 2009 and also 2010. It strongly and effectively dealt with its adversaries, and made utmost use of the 500 or so tunnels across the Egyptian borders to bring more than 50% of the basic needs of the Gazans. Some reports had suggested that the resistance forces, specially Hamas, had also succeeded in bringing quantities of weapons and other war needs that made the GS in a better defensive conditions than it were prior to the war. Nonetheless, Israel had, partially at least, succeeded in "burning into the consciousness," so to speak. For both Hamas and the government had linked before the war between the stoppage of the missiles and the truce from one side and the lifting of the siege on GS on the other side. The truce was fixed for a few months after which the resistance would resume launching the missiles. This was what actually happened on 19/12/2008, when, under the slogan of the legitimacy of resistance, tens of missiles were daily fired to press the enemy to lift the siege. But after the war on GS, the truce was open and unconditional, where by the resistance stopped firing the missiles while the siege continued. At the same time, the Israelis became reluctant to attack GS, especially after the fierce resistance of Hamas and other resistance factions.

Third: The Dialogue and the Placement of the Palestinian House in Order

The prospects of dialogue and the efforts to achieve reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas in 2009 were not by any means better than those in 2008. For there had been within Palestine two conflicting visions and paths for dealing with the priorities and fundamentals of the national project, the way to administer the conflict with the occupation, the resistance and the peace options, and the way to adapt with the Arab regimes and the international community. Thus, it is unfair and simplistic too, to view the differences between Hamas and Fatah and between the governments of Ramallah and Gaza as a mere struggle for power. For it is illogical to consider Hamas' steadfastness versus the blockade and the Israeli aggression on the GS, as well as the hardship that it suffered from the closure of its institutions, imprisonment of its members of parliament (MPs) and the sufferings of its supporters in the WB as just a desire by its leaders to enjoy being in power. Similarly, Fatah's insistence that Hamas recognizes the treaties concluded between the PLO and Israel and its insistence to accept forming a government whose program adheres to that of the PLO and to the conditions of the Quartet can only be seen as a drive towards a political program that includes recognition of Israel and the stoppage of resistance.

The Palestinian dialogue experienced three major crises:

1. The first crisis is related to the nature and orientation of the Palestinian national struggle, including its fundamentals, priorities, political program and ways to manage the struggle. For there were profound differences and confrontations between an ideological Islamic resistive path that aspires to achieve change and to impose new equations to administer the conflict, and, on the other hand, a pragmatic one that felt it necessary to acclimatize with Arab realism and the available resources.
2. A crisis of confidence that has aggravated because of the Palestinian schism, lawlessness, the dominance of Hamas over GS, the cooperation of the PA with the occupation to track Hamas and to try to uproot it, and the media and security campaign between the two sides.
3. The crisis of foreign pressure and conditions, where these two elements had always blocked progress in the national dialogue, though different and



milder phraseology was used to present them, such as “adherence to the agreements signed by the PLO,” and the “formation of a government that is capable to lift the blockade.” Moreover, the American warnings of a halt to the peace process, suspension of aid and resumption of the blockade of the WB have never stopped... if Hamas is to be part of a government that does not accept the conditions of the Quartet. The United States (US/ USA) would raise no objections to the reconciliation as long as it leads towards the victory of Fatah in the elections, restoration of its authority in GS and the containment of Hamas or its marginalization and popular delegitimization. Any other courses mean the continuation of the siege and the crisis and even their aggravation.

The Israeli aggression on Gaza (27/12/2008–18/1/2009) represented a gigantic turning point in the sequence of events. For the brave steadfastness of the people and the resistance had dashed the hopes of some quarters to secure the downfall of Hamas by force. On the contrary, the substantial Arab-Islamic, even international sympathy that Hamas in particular and the resistance in general had won restored the glamour of both. This sympathy provided an exit to the predicament Hamas found itself in during autumn 2008, after declining to participate in the national dialogue in Cairo and blaming it for its failure. Meanwhile, the passive and confused performance of the government in Ramallah placed Fatah leadership and Fayyad in a critical situation. Hence forth, there were increasing calls within Fatah and the PA for dialogue to put the Palestinian house in order, and to stop the mutual antagonistic campaigns. Under this pressure, the PA had no option but to freeze the peace negotiations with Israel.

Hence, an outcome of the aggression on GS was the drive towards national dialogue. Besides, Hamas no longer felt that conditions may be imposed on her, or that it will be weakened or marginalized in the political process. Though by virtue of the Palestinian Basic Law the presidential duration of Mahmud ‘Abbas had expired on 9/1/2009, Hamas did not use this card against its adversaries, though it indicated from time to time that it is there and may be raised. Hamas appears to have decided to allow this issue to be an item of the agenda of the negotiations with its adversaries, where it may be used as a bargaining weapon in the presidency’s quest for political and legal exits.

The suspension of mutual media campaigns was instrumental in providing a conducive environment for the dialogue between Fatah and Hamas, which should have begun on 22/2/2009 had it not been for differences on the issue of the prisoners in the WB. While the PA in Ramallah denied the imprisonment of any of Hamas activists, the latter provided lists of about 500 detainees, and demanded that they be released before the launching of the negotiations.²⁵ However, in February 2009 the PA in Ramallah released 21 prisoners and promised to release another 80 on 23/2/2009.²⁶ But a leader of Hamas, Ra'fat Nasif, denied the release of the latter group (80 detainees), and added, "What we see on the ground is a continuation of a campaign and practices that will have negative impact on the dialogue."²⁷

The issue of Hamas' detainees in the WB continued to be one of the main controversial issues in the negotiations throughout the year, and it had been a reason for their stumbling from time to time. However, Fatah leadership refused to budge to all pressure under the guise that there are no political detainees. The real reason behind this adamant stand could be anybody's guess. Is it because of the desire of Fatah leadership to rule the WB uncontested, or to exploit the detainees' card to the maximum; or is it because it wants to demonstrate to the Israelis and Americans that it is abiding by its obligations to fight "terrorism," observe the provisions of the Road Map, and implement the security reforms that are supervised by the American general Keith Dayton? Thus, these procedures will be on a track separate from the track of the Palestinian dialogue.

Egypt, who was unanimously accepted to be the patron of the dialogue, had actively worked for this goal since the second half of 2008, and fixed 10/11/2008 as the starting date of the dialogue. But this did not materialize because Hamas and three other Palestinian factions declined to attend until the attainment of the following: Release of Hamas' detainees in WB, permission for its delegation from the WB to attend, and that President 'Abbas attends all the sessions of the dialogue not just the opening session.²⁸ Though Egypt was furious by these demands, it quickly accepted after the War on Gaza to resume its patronage and efforts to launch the dialogue.

Finally, Fatah and Hamas started the dialogue on 24–25/2/2009, and other factions followed suit on 26/2/2009. Five committees were formed to deliberate on the issues of elections, security, the PLO, the transitional government and the national reconciliation. Both Fatah and Hamas send signals of their keenness to make the dialogue a success story. While Mahmud 'Abbas called Fatah delegation

“to work for the success of the dialogue by all means,”²⁹ Khalid Mish‘al, head of Hamas political bureau, declared that Hamas had “magnanimously superseded” its bleeding wound in GS and the misery of hundreds of its prisoners in the WB in response to the calls of the dialogue, and to pursuit the all important project of national reconciliation.³⁰ Isma‘il Haniyyah had also emphasized that the “issue of national reconciliation and termination of the schism is a Hamas strategic decision that is unanimously endorsed by Hamas, and that the desire to work for the success of the dialogue is enthusiastically supported by both the interior and diaspora leadership and membership.”³¹

The dialogue conducted six sessions of which the last was on 28–30/6/2009, and progress appeared to have been achieved on several fronts. Egypt called for a seventh and final session on 25–27/7/2009 to sign the reconciliation on the next day of the session, but Hamas had once more insisted on the release of its prisoners in the WB prior to the signature of the reconciliation agreement, and accused Fatah of lack of seriousness with regard to the reconciliation and the termination of the schism.³² However, the PA in Ramallah did not release the prisoners and the seventh session was not convened. Meanwhile, Fatah, who had become preoccupied with its sixth congress of 4/8/2009, declined to attend the proposed session on 25/8/2009 and asked for its indefinite postponement under the guise that the Palestinian National Council (PNC) will hold an emergency meeting on 26–27/8/2009.³³

Evidently lack of trust and the historical differences between Fatah and Hamas made an agreement extremely difficult. These factors had led to an engagement in minute details to secure absolute guarantees for a successful agreement.

On the assumption of the American Presidency by Barack Obama and his apparent determination to press Israel to stop the settlement, Mahmud ‘Abbas and the PA in Ramallah were so optimistic of a breakthrough in the peace process that they decided to shelve an agreement with Hamas lest it spoils the presumably positive environment in America, and because it might not offer the necessary concessions for a deal with Israel. What had further encouraged Fatah’s intransigence was the decline in the glamour that Hamas had initially enjoyed as a result of the war on GS and the tightening of the siege on it, coupled with the destruction and prohibition of the reconstruction. By then, Fatah had increasingly talked of a government that accepts the conditions of the Quartet and the conduct of elections without settling the pending issues.

Meanwhile, Hamas had become increasingly suspicious that the entire dialogue process aimed at holding elections with guaranteed results, thus leading to the uproot of its popular legitimacy in GS. Moreover, it may secure the resumption of Fatah's control over the GS, strengthen its claims of leadership of the Palestinian people and of being their spokesperson, and place it in a better bargaining position in the expected peace negotiations.

During the dialogue sessions, Hamas focused on the necessity of a comprehensive agreement that should settle all the five major issues, and guarantees their parallel implementation on the ground. It also rejected outside pressure, particularly the conditions of the Quartet, and demanded the release of its prisoners in the WB prior to the signature of the agreement. Fatah, on the other hand, concentrated on the formation of a government of national consensus that should be qualified to lift the blockade, and conduct presidential and legislative elections.

Hamas assumed that the resignation of Fayyad government would be an indicator of Fatah's seriousness in the quest for the reconciliation. But the delegation given to Fayyad two months later to form a new government, as well as the decision of Fatah's leadership to convene the PNC in August 2009, under the pretext of completing the membership of the Executive Committee of the PLO, were, in the opinion of Hamas and the opposition forces, indicators of Fatah's retrogression from the reconciliation process. This is particularly so as the formation of the government and the election of the leadership of the PLO were integral parts of the dialogue, and that the decisions taken by Fatah on these issues were not only inopportune but harmful to the realization of a true and viable reconciliation agreement.

The formation of a government was, indeed, a very controversial issue. Fatah maintained that this government should be capable to lift the siege, thus had to abide by the political, program of the PLO and the treaties it signed.³⁴ In effect, this meant the acceptance of the Quartet conditions, including stoppage of the resistance and the recognition of Israel, which was categorically unacceptable to Hamas and the resistance factions. However, Hamas had no objection that the formation of this government be based on the National Conciliation Document of the Palestinian Prisoners, which had been almost totally accepted by all the factions. It had no objection also that this government has specific missions: the elections, the reconstruction of GS and the reform of the security forces... and others.³⁵

During the second session of the dialogue, and in response to a proposal by the PFLP and PIJ that the new government be without a political program, Ahmad Qurei', the leader of Fatah's delegation, demanded that it should "embody a crystal clean recognition of Israel."³⁶

Abu Mazin tried to find a political exit on the issue of the new government that guarantees its recognition by the international community. He suggested that Hamas recommends four of its members to be ministers in the government of national consensus. Those will be like "commandos," they'll abide personally by the signed agreements and declare that they are on their own and they do not represent Hamas. However, Secretary of PLC, Mahmud al-Ramahi, had observed that this suggestion was not serious, let alone that Hamas will never accept it.³⁷

The security issue was amongst the most complicated agenda of the dialogue, and it witnessed heated argumentation throughout the dialogue sessions. Initially, Fatah tried to restrict the security reforms to GS only, where it demanded that many of the security officials whose services had been terminated after Hamas' control of the GS should be allowed to return to their posts. But Hamas insisted that the WB be included in the security arrangements. However, the political detention and the security measures undertaken against the institutions in both GS and WB had clouded the prospects of the dialogue. Moreover, the assassination of a number of Hamas members by the officials of the PA in Qalqilya on 31/5/2009 was particularly harmful. In response to this tragic development, and after a meeting that he had with the Egyptian Minister 'Omar Suleiman, director of the Egyptian General Intelligence Services (EGIS), Khalid Mish'al said "The stumbling block of the Palestinian reconciliation are the arrests and abductions in the WB," and added, "There is a persistent campaign undertaken by the PA's security forces in the WB to uproot Hamas."³⁸ However, the Egyptians had exerted great efforts, particularly in the summer of 2009, to resolve the issue of the detainees, including delegations that they sent to occupied Palestine and Damascus.³⁹

All in all, the sixth session of the dialogue had apparently struck agreement on certain sensitive issues, like security and the detainees, which were acceptable to both parties. Fatah and Hamas had also agreed to form a joint committee of all factions, to coordinate and supervise the reconciliation agreement, and whose work will be done as soon as the elections are held.⁴⁰ But this item provoked the opposition of several of the PLO factions. It was rejected by the DFLP on the basis it will grant legitimacy to Hamas' coup in GS, the PFLP on the other hand felt that

this will consecrate the Palestinian schism, as the proposed committee will work towards coordination between the governments of GS and Ramallah.⁴¹

During August and September 2009, several obstacles seem to have been overcome. It was agreed to incorporate in GS's security forces three thousand individuals who had previously worked in them, to reconstruct the security forces in the WB and the GS under the supervision of Egyptian and Arab officers, and to conduct the presidential and legislative elections on 25/6/2010. The latter should, however, be done through mixed system of constituencies (25%) and proportional (75%).⁴²

By early October 2009, both Fatah and Hamas sent signals that the reconciliation agreement will be signed soon. In fact the Palestinian delegations were expected to meet on 19/10/2009, and the signature would take place six days later. But the demand of the PA to postpone the vote on the Goldstone Report by the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) had led to an outcry among the public and in the press, who doubted the honesty and credibility of the PA, and accused it of committing a "crime," and of having no respect for the blood of the dead. Within this tense environment, Hamas asked Egypt to delay the signature ceremony of the reconciliation agreement pending restoration of calm and the bypass of the current bitterness. But the officials in Egypt saw in this postponement a great loss to the Palestinian people, and a sheer waste of the tremendous Egyptian effort.⁴³

However, Egypt presented a final proposal of the Palestinian reconciliation agreement, and demanded that it be signed by both Fatah and Hamas by 15/10/2009 at the latest and by the other Palestinian factions within five days.⁴⁴ Being faced by the scandal of Goldstone Report, Fatah hastily signed the agreement and Abu Mazin sent to Egypt on 15/10/2009, a personal envoy, 'Azzam al-Ahmad, to hand to the authorities in Cairo the text as signed by Fatah leaders.⁴⁵ As for Hamas, it asked for a grace period to read and revise the text, but Cairo firmly declared that the text which it prepared is final, not open to any further discussion, and that it should be signed as it is.⁴⁶

A Résumé of the Egyptian Draft

The Egyptian 22 page, 4,100 words draft of the reconciliation agreement, entitled "The Palestinian National Accord Agreement, Cairo 2009," and handed to all the Palestinians factions, is one of the most detailed documents. Its contents may be summarized in the following:

First: The PLO: The document stipulated that the PLO should be reactivated and developed according to agreed bases, so that it includes all forces and factions. A new PNC, which represents the Palestinians of the interior and the Diaspora, should be formed. The delegated committee to develop the Organization should complete its membership and hold its first meeting immediately after the implementation of this agreement. It should fix the relationship between the institutions and the structures as well as the functions of both the PLO and the PA in a way that maintains the authority of both of them and avoid duplicity.

Until the election of the new PNC, this committee will be authorized to establish the bases and working methods of the Council and to address the crucial political and national issues in a consensus manner, and to pursue the implementation of the decisions derived from the dialogue.

Second: The Elections: The PLC and presidential elections, as well as those of the PNC in the WB and GS, including Jerusalem, should be concurrently conducted on Monday 28/6/2010, and all should abide by this provision. The elections of the PNC should be based on complete proportional representation in the homeland and the Diaspora wherever possible. The PLC elections should be done through mixed system of constituencies (25%) and proportional (75%), and the qualifying threshold will be 2%. The Palestinian Territories (WB and GS) should be divided into 16 electoral districts (11 in WB and 5 in GS). The elections should be conducted under Arab and international supervision, and in a transparent, honest and fair way, and accompanied by elections monitoring procedures. The Palestinian president forms the electoral committee on the basis of the deliberations that he undertakes and according to the nominations given by the political forces and national figures.

Third: Security: The security provision calls for the enactment of the laws related to the security forces according to the functions allocated to them. These forces should be professional and non-factional, while the standards and bases for the reconstruction, restructuring and uniting of these forces should be defined. The security forces should be accountable to PLC. The provision stipulates that any intelligence cooperation and supply of information to the enemy that affects the nation, the citizens or the resistance be considered as high treason. It also provides for prohibition of political detention, respect of the security forces for the Palestinian right of resistance, and to detach the security institutions from political differences. It also records the prohibition of using arms for purposes other than the professional ones, and according to the recorded regulations.

The document provides for a supreme security committee that is formed due to a presidential decree, its members are professional officers. It should exercise its duty of implementing The Palestinian National Accord Agreement in WB and GS under Egyptian and Arab supervision. Amongst its functions is to enact and supervise the implementation of security policies, and to rebuild and restructure, with Arab and Egyptian assistance, the security forces in a way that maintains the rights of all their employees.

Fourth: National Reconciliations: The document calls for dissemination of the culture of tolerance, reconciliation, political partnership and co-existence, and to resolve all the violations resulting from the lawlessness and schism in a legal and legitimate manner. Moreover, the document provided for the setting of a program to compensate financially and morally all the victims of schism and violence. It called for putting the necessary bases and mechanism to prevent the repetition of the sad events, for the firm stand against all kinds of mutual incitements, for the punishment of all individuals who commit crimes against the people and their property irrespective of their organizational, tribal or family affiliation, and for the issuance of an honor covenant that stipulates the prohibition of inter-Palestinian fighting.

Fifth: The Joint Committee for the Implementation of the National Accord Agreement: This committee should be composed of 16 members who represent Fatah, Hamas, the factions and the independents. Each of Fatah and Hamas nominates eight members, and, after a consensus on the membership, President Mahmud ‘Abbas will form this committee by a presidential decree. In his capacity as the President of PLO and the PA, President ‘Abbas will be the authority for this committee. However, the committee is a coordinating body without any political obligations or functions. It should start functioning once the agreement is signed, and its work should be terminated after the elections and the formation of a new Palestinian government. The committee is authorized to implement the reconciliation agreement through coordination with the relevant quarters, prepare the environment for the conduct of the presidential and PLC elections as well as those of the PNC, supervise and settle all issues related to the Palestinian internal reconciliation and to pursue the operations of the reconstruction of GS.

The document also provides for the settlement of the civil cases and the administrative problems resulting from the schism, including the appointment and promotion of officials, and to decide on the suspension of salaries and transfer of

officials within the government institutions and divisions, as well as the relevant but controversial presidential and governmental ordinances and decrees through a special legal and administrative committee. The document calls for the return of all civil servants, who had been in service before 14/6/2007 (the military takeover in GS), to their posts in the WB and GS, including the dismissed and the absentees because of the schism. Moreover, the document provides for the formation of advisory units to settle the legal cases in coordination with the relevant parties.

The document considered all individuals who were exposed to all kinds of harm during the time of the internal confrontations as victims of violence. The National Reconciliation Committee should see to it that the PA shoulders the responsibility of settling their cases.

Sixth: The Detainees: Both Fatah and Hamas should provide according to the latest information lists of the detainees in their prisons, of which copies should be handed, after verification and before the signature of the National Accord Agreement, to Egypt and an agreeable legal firm. Each side should release all the detainees from all factions immediately after the signature of the agreement.⁴⁷

The signature by the leadership of Fatah and the PA in Ramallah of this document and the hesitation of Hamas to do so had provided a much needed political exit for the former from their scandalous decision to postpone the discussion of Goldstone Report in the United Nations (UN). It also enabled them to launch an extensive media campaign against Hamas, who was accused of obstructing the efforts towards national unity and reconciliation. Fatah had made utmost use of the genuine Palestinian-Arab-international desire for a reconciliation to push Hamas into a tight corner. Hamas, who refused to sign under pressure and before ascertaining the compatibility of the text with the minutes of the sessions of the dialogue, appeared to be rather confused. This was reflected in the different statements of its leaders on the probability of signature and on the remarks on the document that should be given due consideration. Hamas found it extremely difficult to convince the ordinary observer of the validity of its rationale for declining to sign. Moreover, there were rumors of differences of opinion between Hamas leaderships in GS and Damascus, whereby the latter was said to be more extreme on the issue than the former.

Lack of confidence and bitter historical experiences have been behind Hamas' insistence on closely checking the text, and on insisting to incorporate some

expressions that, in its opinion, were essential to prevent future attempts to retreat from the undertakings by the other side. Hamas insisted on the incorporation of some modifications in the text, or to have them in a legally and politically binding appendix to the text. The most significant of those observations may be summarized in the following:

1. To add a sentence to the paragraph on the PLO, after the part that explains the provisional leadership framework until the conduct of the PLC elections, to the effect, “the above functions are not subject to suspension as they are viewed as a national consensus.”
2. To amend the paragraph on the electoral committee to read, “The formation of an electoral committee through consensus, and the president issues a decree to this effect.” This is different from the text in the document which stipulates that the Palestinian President forms the electoral committee on the basis of the deliberations that he undertakes and according to the nominations given by the political forces and national figures.
3. Addition of a text that clarifies that the formation of the supreme security committee should be consensually agreed upon.
4. To replace the word “rebuild” by the word “build” in the following text: “to rebuild and restructure, with Arab and Egyptian assistance, the security forces... .”⁴⁸

But the Egyptian government and Fatah refused to consider any discussion or amendment to the document. Thus, the project of reconciliation faced some obstacles. The interference of some Palestinian quarters, like the PFLP and independent personalities like Munib al-Masri, failed to provide suitable solutions. Attempts for mediation by Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Sudan and Libya, which continued up to the eve of the Arab summit in Sirte, Libya late March 2010, had also failed.

In October and November 2010, Fatah and Hamas resumed their meetings. It seems that both parties resolved most differences, except for the reform of security forces in WB and the participation of Hamas, along with other national factions, in their administration. This issue remained a difficult obstacle to the final signing of the agreement.

Fourth: The Elections

Hamas bases its position towards the duration of the presidency of Mahmud ‘Abbas on the constitutional provision that fixed it for four years to end on 8/1/2009. But Fatah depends on Election Law No. 9 of 2005 which provides that the presidential and PLC elections should be held concurrently, hence is its argument that the duration of Abbas’ presidency should be extended till the time of the PLC elections. However, the crux of the problem is political, irrespective of this legal debate, i.e., which is binding, the constitutional text or the law that ‘Abbas issued to explain it.

Hamas leaders had issued many statements that emphasized the end of the duration of ‘Abbas’ presidency,⁴⁹ and some of the movement’s literature spoke from time to time of “the president whose term had expired.” Nonetheless, due to the aggression on GS and the subsequent rounds of dialogue to conclude reconciliation, Hamas dealt with ‘Abbas as a de facto president. Hence, throughout the year 2009, it did not take any practical steps or pursued concrete policies to reject dealing with the presidency. Moreover, in several places the Egyptian document referred to ‘Abbas as president, which was not seriously contested by Hamas. Besides, Hamas agreed to the document’s provision to conduct the presidential and legislative elections concurrently.

The elections were a major issue of the Palestinian dialogue. While Fatah and the PLO factions insisted on conducting them solely according to the proportional representation system, Hamas demanded a mixed system of both the constituencies and the proportional system, as was the case in the 2006 elections (50% constituencies and 50% proportional). Hamas felt that candidates who run on its lists or that of the factions may be exposed to arrest by the occupation forces. Besides, the proportional representation system gives to small factions a greater political role than their actual size, particularly so when none of the major parties gets simple majority in the elections (i.e., half of the seats plus one). However, Hamas initially agreed that 40% be for the constituencies and 60% for proportional representation, but after long debate it agreed that the percentage be correspondingly 25% and 75%. Fatah also agreed to this arrangement.

According to the Egyptian document, all Palestinian factions had unanimously accepted that the presidential and PLC elections, as well as those of the PNC,

be concurrently conducted on 28/6/2010, a date that was not contested by any of them. But the crisis that accompanied Goldstone Report, and the insistence of Hamas that its remarks should be addressed before the signature of the Egyptian document, triggered Abu Mazin to issue on 23/10/2009 a presidential decree that fixed 24/1/2010 a date for the presidential and PLC elections.⁵⁰ This was interpreted either as a complete disregard to Hamas and an attempt to impose certain orientation to the Palestinian drive, or simply a vehicle of pressure on Hamas to sign the Egyptian document.

The Palestinian Central Council supported the elections' decree,⁵¹ and Fatah considered it as an absolute constitutional right that provides for the people an exit from the crisis. In the name of the DFLP, Saleh Zeidan, a member of its political bureau, called for the implementation of the decree, which was also supported by the Palestinian People's Party (PPP), Fida Party, the Palestinian Arab Front (PAF) and the PPSF.⁵² But Hamas rejected the decree, and 'Aziz Dweik, the speaker of the PLC, maintained that it needs to be endorsed by the PLC, particularly so as a parliamentary majority (110 members) is available to call for a meeting,⁵³ though the PA in Ramallah may prohibit such a meeting. Ahmad Bahr, the first deputy speaker of the PLC, argued that 'Abbas had "lost his legal and national credentials,"⁵⁴ that "he has no constitutional right to issue any decree as his term had already expired," and that the decree is "valueless from a constitutional point of view."⁵⁵ Hamas issued a statement that argued that by this step 'Abbas had practically and unilaterally "ended the drive for national reconciliation and to end the schism." It also emphasized Hamas' rejection of this "illegitimate" decree because 'Abbas "had lost his legitimacy and the duration of his presidency had already legally expired."⁵⁶

PIJ viewed the decree as "a new blow to the efforts of dialogue and reconciliation," while the PFLP adopted a middle of the road response by claiming that the decree is "a constitutional claim," though it is not "a priority."⁵⁷ The alliance of the national forces in Damascus condemned the decree, and Khalid Mish'al said in the name of this alliance that this move is "an illegal step" that deepens the schism, and added, "There will be no elections under the schism... Reconciliation first, then the resort to elections in natural and fair circumstances."⁵⁸

Hamas refused to allow the Central Election Committee to function in GS, and cautioned that any person who deals with the elections will be subject to

accountability.⁵⁹ On 12/11/2010, the Central Election Committee declared that it is unable to conduct the elections on the date fixed by the presidential decree because of its inability to pursue its duty in GS.⁶⁰ Hence, President ‘Abbas and Fatah decided, on 24/1/2010, to call off the elections.

In another vein, President ‘Abbas declared on 5/11/2009, that he will not seek re-election to the office of the presidency of the PA, adding that this is not “a bargaining or a manipulative move.”⁶¹ The step may reflect ‘Abbas’ frustration caused by the chaotic domestic Palestinian situation and the impasse in the peace process. But it is not farfetched to suggest that the real motive is the President’s desire to assess, through the reactions to his announcement and the attempts that may be launched to persuade him to change his mind, the degree of internal and external support that he actually has. Just before his announcement, ‘Abbas had expressed to several leaders of the security forces and the PA his extreme displeasure with the Israeli-American-Arab positions and policies.⁶²

However, ‘Abbas’ candidacy for a second term was supported by Fatah leadership, the Executive Committee of the PLO, the presidents of Israel, America and Egypt and the King of Jordan, as well as from other quarters that belong to the so-called “moderate” trend,⁶³ who support the peace path. ‘Abbas was persistently requested not to submit his resignation lest a constitutional vacuum occurs and he will officially be succeeded by Hamas leader ‘Aziz Dweik, the speaker of the PLC. But ‘Abbas made it clear that he will not vacate his position until the forthcoming elections.⁶⁴ However, he also continued to emphasize his disinterest to run for a second term.

In an attempt to provide a constitutional cover for the delay of the elections, the Central Council of the PLO decided on 16/12/2009 to extend the term of both the President of the PA and the PLC, pending general presidential and legislative elections in the WB and GS.⁶⁵ The Council’s decision to extend both terms may be because of its desire not to appear to be biased towards the President alone, or because of its keenness to avoid deepening the Palestinian schism. However, as Hamas argued, the Council does not have the constitutional power to extend the duration of the President because it itself is “an illegitimate body” because it is “derived from bodies whose durations had already expired.”⁶⁶

Hence, the fiasco of the 2009 Palestinian elections ended in an indecisive and confused manner. Moreover, their conduct was primarily associated with the

realization of the Palestinian reconciliation and the availability of conducive and objective local, regional and international environment to conduct an election in which all Palestinian factions participate.

Fifth: The Palestinian Liberation Organization

As was the case in the preceding years, the PLO continued to be under the domination of Fatah. Besides, it failed to accommodate Hamas and other resistance factions. It failed, also, to renew its structure and institutions, whose legitimacy had remained at stake because their terms of reference had expired many years ago.

The poor performance of the PLO leadership during the war on GS, and the frustration caused by the total rejection of reforming and rebuilding the Organization had impelled Mish'al to declare in the "Victory Festival," held in Doha on 28/1/2009, that Hamas works with all factions to form a new Palestinian body that "upkeeps the right of return, and adheres to the rights and the fundamentals."⁶⁷

Mish'al declarations led to an outcry in the Palestinian scene, as Fatah and its ilk exploited them to launch a brutal campaign against Hamas, making utmost use of the Palestinians' traditional and emotional desire for unity, and their sentimental feelings of respect and high regard to the PLO. Some had also felt that these declarations provide an opportune platform to undermine Hamas, whose steadfastness during the war on GS had accelerated its popularity to the peak, while the PA and its leadership were widely and bitterly criticized. To confront Hamas and its rising prestige, some of the leaders of the PA and Fatah organized a verbal campaign of abuse that used such strong expressions as "The attempts of Mish'al will utterly fail," "Hamas is trying to kill the Organization"⁶⁸ and that "Fatah will confront the Iranian conspiracy."⁶⁹ Moreover, Hamas was accused of "rejecting right from the beginning to incorporate in the national Palestinian struggle,"⁷⁰ and that Mish'al's declarations were "a conspiracy, and a rejected and denounced coup against the PLO."⁷¹

The controversy has thus become heated, antagonistic and provocative, but it did not frankly and boldly address the miserable conditions of the Organization. Nor did it respond to the urgent and crucial questions: Who is benefiting from the paralysis of the PLO legislative institutions and executive bodies, and from transforming it into a mere puppet in the hands of a specific faction? Moreover, who



had taken it to the intensive care unit to be awoken only when it is needed to rubber stamp some resolutions and decisions? However, Fatah leader Hussam Khader had frankly, even bluntly, called for a serious study of the issue, and he urged the leadership of the PLO, Fatah and the PA to be ready “not only for partnership with Hamas, but also for its leadership of the Organization.”⁷²

However, Muhammad Nazzal, a member of Hamas political bureau, maintained that Mish‘al did not call for the abolition of the PLO per se, or to find an alternative to it, but had simply suggested the founding of a framework for coordination between the Palestinian factions that were excluded from their Organization.⁷³

Nonetheless, the fact remains that the PLO had become a fundamental item in the Palestinian dialogue, where it had been discussed elaborately and extensively. Moreover, as demonstrated in the above-mentioned Egyptian document, an agreement had in principle been reached on the items related to the reform of the PLO and the election of its PNC and a new leadership.

Meanwhile, Fatah had been by the summer of 2009 seriously engaged in having the quorum in the Executive Committee of the PLO by filling the vacant seats of some demised and absent members. But this was a negative signal to Hamas and the factions concerned with the rebuilding and reorganization of the Organization on new basis, particularly so as this step had coincided with the final touches on the reconciliation agreement, in which the reform of the PLO figured quite high. Fatah was, however, blamed for rushing to complete without a consensus the membership of the Executive Committee of the PLO simply because it wanted to consolidate its dominance of the Organization, and thus continue to use it as tool against the opposition.⁷⁴ But Fatah had, on the other hand, argued that there is no excuse for an indefinite waiting for the implementation of the reconciliation agreement, and felt it necessary to take at least temporary arrangements to conduct the minimum functions of the Organization, which is, irrespective of what is being said about it, the acceptable and sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in both the Arab and international arenas.

Meanwhile, Salim Za‘noun, chairman of the PNC, declared that the Council will convene an emergency session on 25/8/2009 in Ramallah to elect six members of the Executive Committee in replacement of the deceased Yasir ‘Arafat, Yasir ‘Amr, Suleiman al-Najab, Faisal Hussein, Emil Jarjou and Samir Ghosheh.⁷⁵

The meeting of the PNC convened in the presence of 325 members—out of more than 700—whose membership had, however, officially already expired. Four members were unanimously elected, and they are Sa'ib 'Uraiqat (Fatah), Ahmad Majdalani (PPSF), Hanna 'Omeira (PPP) and Saleh Raf'at (Fida). The rest two, Ahmad Qurei'(Fatah) and Hanan 'Ashrawi (independent), were elected by popular vote, the former got 234 votes and the latter 182. Hence the membership of the Executive Committee totaled 18, who were: Mahmud 'Abbas, Sa'ib 'Uraiqat, Faruq Qaddumi, Ahmad Qurei', Tayssir Khaled, 'Abdul Rahim Mallouh, 'Ali Ishaq, Abu Isma'il, Hanna 'Omeira, Saleh Raf'at, Yasser 'Abed Rabbo, As'ad 'Abd al-Rahman, Riad al-Khudari, Ghassan al-Shak'a, Muhammad Zuhdi al-Nashashibi, Zakaria al-Agha, Hanan 'Ashrawi and Ahmad Majdalani.⁷⁶

The holding of the PNC in Ramallah under the Israeli occupation provoked bitter criticism. For, under such circumstances, it would have such an extremely limited freedom that it could not possibly claim to truly represent the Palestinian people. Additionally, criticism was also on the constraints related to the expiry of the legal duration of its members.

Another problem was related to the membership of Yasser 'Abed Rabbo in the Executive Committee, which he joined as representative of Fida Party from which he had resigned many years ago, and the party had, in fact, appointed Saleh Raf'at to represent it in this committee.⁷⁷ Though Fida and two other small parties (DFLP and PPP) had only two seats in the PLC, they were represented in the Executive Committee by four members, including 'Abed Rabbo. Interestingly, the latter was the head of a committee that was appointed by the Executive Committee to draw a plan for the development of the Organization and its departments.⁷⁸

Towards the end of the PNC's meeting, Mahmud 'Abbas said, "Now I can say that the Palestinian legitimacy is viable, the quorum is attained, and the PLO is in good order. Curse upon those who impatiently awaited the destruction of this Organization."⁷⁹ However, at best, this statement is nothing but wishful thinking. What illustrates its absurdity is an observation that Nabil 'Amr voiced in the meeting of the PNC where he said sarcastically "It's about time," to Mahmud 'Abbas who admitted that throughout his leadership of the PLO during the last five years he had done virtually nothing.⁸⁰



Sixth: The Sixth Congress of Fatah

Though the Revolutionary Council of Fatah had recommended in September 2004 to convene the Organization's sixth congress and appointed a preparatory committee for this purpose, progress towards this goal was at a snail pace. In the Strategic Report of 2008, we have explained the efforts exerted during that year to achieve this twenty-year dream.

However, by early 2009 there were reportedly some attempts to convene this conference in March to coincide with the festival of al-Karamah battle, and that the probable venue will be either, Egypt, Jordan or the WB. Moreover, the preparatory committee was said to have almost consensually decided that the membership of the congress be 1,500 members, of whom about 80% were expected to be from inside Palestine.

However, the conference had been repeatedly delayed, and there were conflicts and heated controversies on the venue and the number of the members. Fatah had officially requested Egypt to host the function, but the latter responded in the second week of April 2009 that it prefers it to be inside Palestine.⁸¹ Ten days later the Jordanian government had likewise officially apologized.⁸² Thus the initial inclination to hold the conference abroad had eventually changed in favor of having it in the WB, particularly so as President 'Abbas had forcefully supported the notion vis-à-vis an opposition from several prominent Fatah leaders led by Faruq Qaddumi, who wanted to have the conference in the Diaspora. However, there had been noticeable confusion on the venue of the conference when Muhammad Ghunaym, head of preparatory committee, declared, on 10/5/2009, that his committee decided that the conference will be convened in one of the Arab countries. The Central Committee of Fatah opted for the Diaspora "in the interests of the unity of the Organization and the Palestinian people in the interior and abroad, and far away from the occupation, its practices, pressure and conspiracies."⁸³ This situation prompted 'Abbas to decisively intervene, on 11/5/2009, where he decided to end the work of the preparatory committee and to hold the conference in the WB. Thus, his move was in conformity with the requests of elected Fatah leaders of the interior.⁸⁴ Ahmad Qurei '(Abu 'Ala)', Nasr Yusuf and Abu Mahir Ghunaym had all criticized 'Abbas' stand on the issue. Qurei', chairman of Fatah Department for Recruitment and Organization, had openly told 'Abbas that, by virtue of his

official position, he could not possibly agree to the holding of the conference in the interior. It will lead to a split in the Organization.⁸⁵

In a memorandum, of which excerpts were published in *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 82 Fatah leaders opposed the drive to hold the conference in the interior, accused 'Abbas of taking advantage of his presidency of the PA to wage a coup in the Organization, and warned that Fatah is subject to a well planned conspiracy to destroy it.⁸⁶

Nonetheless, 'Abbas was determined to impose, if necessary, his will to convene the congress in Bethlehem.⁸⁷ On 14/6/2009, he secured a decision from Fatah Central Committee to hold the conference "inside the nation" at a specified date, 4/8/2009,⁸⁸ and, later on, he got the support of the Revolutionary Council, which, 'Abbas cautioned, "should be implemented verbatimly."⁸⁹

The crisis reached to a point of no return when the Secretary of Fatah's Central Committee, Faruq Qaddumi, openly accused in a press conference 'Abbas and Muhammad Dahlan of conspiring to poison the late President 'Arafat, and to assassinate some leaders from Hamas and other Palestinian factions. Qaddumi described 'Abbas as "a dissenter from Fatah" and of being "individualist and a despot...".⁹⁰ Despite the grumbling resulting from these charges, which were voiced by a senior and historical leader of Fatah, no split or a major rebellion took place within the ranks of the Organization, and the threats of Qaddumi to hold a counter conference of the adversaries of 'Abbas did not hold water. Apparently 'Abbas and his ilk were in firm control of Fatah and well prepared to supersede these repercussions, particularly after they persuaded Muhammad Ghunaym, who was in charge of the organizational aspect, to shift to the option of the interior.

Moreover, the prevailing regional Arab environment was in their favor to such an extent that Qaddumi and his comrades would not possibly be able to establish an alternative Fatah organization, or to hold the conference in an Arab country. Besides, the accusations that Qaddumi claimed and the documents presented in their support were not convincing to many within and outside the Organization. For they were launched too late (five years late) to be effective, and appeared to have been said not for the sake of revealing the truth, but were primarily vindictive and motivated by then unprecedented state of political animosity.



‘Abbas secured the firm support of Fatah’s Central Committee, which described the minutes of a meeting that Qaddumi referred to (the document) as fabricated, contradictory and full of lies, and that they provoke sedition.⁹¹ The Executive Committee violently and unprecedentedly attacked Qaddumi, describing his declarations as “hysterical,” and threatened to take measures against him.⁹² ‘Abbas himself had described Qaddumi’s charges as “series of lies that aimed at obstructing Fatah’s sixth congress.”⁹³ All in all, ‘Abbas and his supporters managed within a few days to absorb and contain the negative repercussions provoked by the declarations and objections of al-Qaddumi.

The sensitive issue of membership of the congress was another sensitive issue, which had been a source of contention throughout the years of preparation and until the opening of the conference. There were many suggestions on the optimum size of membership, but the figure 1,500 seemed to have been the most plausible and accepted one, particularly within the circles of the preparatory committee, which had endorsed it several times, the latest of which was on 10/5/2009, when it finally fixed the number as 1,550.⁹⁴ Surprisingly, however, in late July, just a few days before the congress, the number of the members was somehow increased to 2,300. This was unacceptable to some quarters in Fatah in the WB and GS,⁹⁵ who maintained that this increase was effected without the knowledge of the Central and preparatory committees.⁹⁶ However, the official final number was 2,350,⁹⁷ amongst whom 400 were from GS. All in all, the problem of the numbers revealed the organizational and administrative decay in Fatah. The subject of membership, administrative hierarchy and the representation systems of any party or organizational institution constitute the minimum requirement for any cohesive, well-defined performance.

In return for allowing Fatah’s representatives in GS to attend the conference, the dismissed government asked for the release of its detainees in the WB, and to provide it with a quantity of passports to facilitate the movements of its personnel as well as ordinary citizens such as patients, students and merchants. Notwithstanding a flood of mediations and negotiations, no agreement was concluded on the issue. Hamas’ prisoners remained in their detention, and Fatah’s representatives in GS were deprived participation in the congress, which had a negative impact on it. This situation aggravated the internal Palestinian scene, where Hamas accused Fatah of not being serious in its reconciliation, of its agreement on the continuity

of detaining Hamas prisoners, of not being able to do anything incompatible with Dayton's security program, and of prioritizing keeping Hamas prisoners in jail over its member's participation in the congress. On the other hand, Fatah accused Hamas of gravely insulting Fatah, of affecting its conference and all its events negatively, and of deliberately trying to spoil "its democratic wedding," a red line that should not have been passed.⁹⁸

Ahmad Qurei' opened the conference on 4/8/2009, which was also addressed by President 'Abbas. It elected 'Othman Abu Gharbieh as chairman, Sabri Saidam first deputy and Amin Maqbul second deputy. The conference exceeded the originally planned three-day duration to eight days, which reflected the huge size of the issues addressed and the extensive discussions, deliberations and comments by many members of the congress.

The congress increased the membership of the Executive Committee from 21 to 23 members, and re-elected Mahmud 'Abbas as the leader of the movement, and a member of the Central Committee. Hence, 18 other members were to be elected to the Central Committee, who should later appoint four others. The membership of the Revolutionary Council was fixed as 128, of whom 80 will be elected by the congress, 25 to be appointed by the Revolutionary Council in its first meeting, and 20 are to be from Fatah's detainees in Israeli jails.

The most prominent points of the political program of Fatah, as endorsed by the congress, were:⁹⁹

- The right of the Palestinian people to resist the occupation by all means in accordance with the provisions of international law, including military struggle.
- Rejection of the state with temporary borders, and the rejection of Israel as a Jewish state in defense of the rights of the refugees and those of our people across the green line.
- The option of armed resistance is a style and form of the struggle. It is derived from the right of the Palestinian people to resist the occupation, settlement, expulsion, enforced migration and racial discrimination, which has been legitimized by all religions and the international law.
- The liberation of the homeland is the focus of Fatah's struggle. This includes the right of the Palestinian people for self-determination, a fundamental right

that is inalienable and cannot be extinguished with the passage of time, and which is recognized and emphasized by the international community.

- The Palestinian people have the right to establish their sovereign and independent state, with Jerusalem as its capital, and the right of the refugees for return and compensation.
- The focus of Fatah's struggle in the short run is to confront and end the settlement. Its strategic option is a just and comprehensive peace that can be attained by several means. But the Organization does not accept stagnation as an alternative, and it patronizes the struggle as a means to achieve peace.

As usual in Fatah, despite objections and noisy protests, compromises, settlements and alliances were finally reached, which reflected in one way or another the size of the centers of power within the movement. Moreover, all kinds of tactics—electoral and otherwise—and resources—political, financial, organizational and security—were used.

The election of the Executive Committee of Fatah brought new faces, while some historical symbols were not included, like Faruq Qaddumi, Hani al-Hassan and Muhammad Jihad. Interestingly, some persons with security and military backgrounds found their way to the new committee, notably Jibril al-Rajoub, Tawfiq al-Tirawi, Muhammad Dahlan, Muhammad al-Madani and Sultan Abu al-'Aynayn. Some of the old guard continued their membership, i.e., Mahmud 'Abbas, Muhammad Ghunaym, Salim al-Za'nun, al-Tayyib 'Abd al-Rahim, Nabil Sha'th and 'Abbas Zaki. Though Marwan al-Barguthi was still in detention, his impact on the congress was vividly visible. Though he ranked the third in terms of the votes that he earned, these votes were less than half of the total votes, which reflects the intensity of the competition and the extent of polarization in the congress. Moreover, unlike what had been rumored, al-Barguthi was not a consensus personality.

Both Muhammad Ishtayeh and Nabil Sha'th shared the 18th position. Since it was not possible to conduct a new round of elections, it was agreed that both of them be included in the committee. Hence, three others (not four) were to be appointed. Two leaders from GS, Sakhr Bseiso and Zakaria al-Agha, were added in October 2009.¹⁰¹ Also, in its 11/4/2010 meeting in Ramallah, Fatah Central Committee recommended appointing Nabil Abu Rudaina as the third member, a procedure subject to the approval of the Revolutionary Council.¹⁰²

Table 1/1: Results of Fatah Central Committee Elections 2009¹⁰⁰

Rank	Name	No. of votes	Rank	Name	No. of votes
1	Muhammad Ghunaym	1,368	2	Mahmud al-'Aloul	1,102
3	Marwan al-Barguthi	1,063	4	Nasir al-Qudwah	964
5	Salim Za'noun	920	6	Jibril al-Rajoub	908
7	Tawfiq al-Tirawi	903	8	Sa'ib 'Uraiqat	863
9	'Othman Abu Gharbieh	854	10	Muhammad Dahlan	853
11	Muhammad al-Madani	821	12	Jamal Muheisen	733
13	Hussein al-Sheikh	726	14	'Azzam al-Ahmad	690
15	Sultan Abu al-'Aynayn	677	16	Al-Tayyib 'Abd al-Rahim	663
17	'Abbas Zaki	642	18	Nabil Sha'th	641
18	Muhammad Ishtayeh	641			

The elections for the Revolutionary Council brought new blood of the age group 30–45 years, who had actively participated in the second and third *Intifadahs*. The congress elected 81 members for this council (two shared the 80th position, and were both incorporated in the council). Among the winners there are 70 male members, 11 women in addition to the Jewish Uriel (Uri) Davis.¹⁰³

A number of Fatah leaders were frustrated because they failed to be elected to the Executive Committee, like Ahmad Qurei' and Nabil 'Amr. The latter had contested the credibility of the totality of the elections, and said that he has big question marks on the elections related to the way they were conducted and the methods used to count the votes. He added that the style decided by the supervisory committee to conduct the elections was not strictly followed, and sarcastically asked, is it by sheer chance that four of the security leaders, who coordinated intelligence with the occupation forces, succeed in these elections?! He also claimed that many of the members of Fatah were extremely furious and angry because of “the rigging operations” in these elections.¹⁰⁴

Whatever the case may be, Fatah had succeeded in convening its congress after a long wait and with minimum losses. Moreover, it rallied the membership behind the organization, and put its house in order in a manner that reflected the influence of



the trends of Mahmud ‘Abbas, Marwan al-Barghuthi and Mahmud Dahlan, as well as that of the security. Moreover, these elections demonstrated the organizational strength of Fatah’s interior leadership versus that in the Diaspora, and had brought in to the membership of the Revolutionary Council and the Executive Committee fresh young elements.

In the second half of 2010, news spread that there were differences between ‘Abbas and Muhammad Dahlan, as ‘Abbas made a number of arrangements to undermine the influence of Dahlan in Fatah and the PA.

Seventh: Internal Security and the Problem of Security

Both the governments of Ramallah and GS had tightened their grips over the internal affairs, thus the security hazards had progressively subsided. But the problem of political arrests continued to have substantial impact on the internal affairs and on the issue of national reconciliation, while security coordination between the PA in Ramallah and the Israeli occupation never stopped.

Meanwhile, the security forces in the WB firmly dealt with the protest rallies and demonstrations that tried to express their frustration and anger against the Israeli aggression on GS. They kept them in a limited scale and prohibited the protesters and the demonstrations from posing pro-Hamas slogans, or clashing with the Israeli occupation forces. Moreover, the security personnel arrested many of the activists who participated in these demonstrations, essentially from Hamas, PFLP, DFLP and other resistance factions.¹⁰⁵

Hamas accused the security forces in Ramallah of organizing a persistent campaign against it that had continued, even accelerated, during the war on GS,¹⁰⁶ and even after the end of the war, many of Hamas activists were put behind bars.¹⁰⁷ Hassan Khreisheh, the second deputy speaker of the PLC, noted that these arrests had particularly increased in the WB just before the beginning of the reconciliation sessions, and that they were masterminded by “the government of Fayyad and other quarters.”¹⁰⁸ However, this issue was a source of extensive controversy during the year 2009. Many argued that Fayyad’s government took these and other security measures under American cover, and that it does not care at all for the views of Fatah members. Fatah leaders who expressed opposition to this security drive were either

marginalized or sent to pension. But others felt that Fatah leadership was actually behind this campaign, otherwise Fayyad government would not have continued in power for one day. They, so they argued, provided the cover for Fayyad and his ilk to undertake this dirty work, which they did not want to do by themselves lest the popular image of Fatah be tarnished and undermined.

According to Hamas, 600 of its activists were detained by the PA. However, under Hamas considerable pressure that their release was an absolute necessity to provide a conducive environment for the dialogue, the security forces released 38 detainees just before the beginning of the dialogue,¹⁰⁹ and another 45 on 12/3/2009.¹¹⁰ However, this issue was not conclusively settled, and it had an extremely negative impact on the reconciliation process. Khalid Mish'al had openly described it as "the stumbling block of the reconciliation," and added that the ugly oppressive measures undertaken by the government of Fayyad, with the tacit blessing of Mahmud 'Abbas and under the supervision of General Dayton, are responsible for obstructing the reconciliation efforts and the Egyptian effort, in particular. Mish'al continued to say that the PA in Ramallah is not targeting the resistance drive of Hamas only, but it is orchestrating a campaign against the movement's social infrastructure, institutions and organizational and political leadership, and that it is after the funds allocated to the orphans and the families of the killed and the detainees. In essence, this is an "attempt to uproot the movement."¹¹¹

In June 2009, the security forces waged an extensive campaign of arrests against Hamas supporters, which included many prominent figures, media and economic experts, academicians, etc. They included Farid Abu Thahir, Hussam al-Safarini, Ahmad al-Shanar and Ghassan Daoud. Women were not spared from this campaign of arrest and detention, which had been viewed by some observers as a political commitment to the peace path and the provisions of the Road Map, while Hamas saw it as nothing but an attempt to uproot it, and to end the reconciliation process once and for all.¹¹² According to Hamas, the various security institutions of the PA arrested in June 474 of its supporters, conducted 555 break-ins and search operations, and called hundreds for investigation.¹¹³ Moreover, in mid December 2009, just before Hamas celebrations of its anniversary, the security arrested 550 of Hamas supporters in the WB. PLC Secretary Mahmud al-Ramahi, bitterly said that this detention drive vividly demonstrates that the claim of the PA in Ramallah that the detainees were security risks not politicians is nothing but fabrication and series of lies.¹¹⁴

Hamas representatives in the PLC protested against harassment, which was clearly seen in the rough handling of ‘Aziz Dweik, the speaker of the PLC, who was not allowed to go to his office and perform his duties under the guise that this could only be done after the successful completion of the reconciliation. On his release, on 23/6/2009, from a three-year detention in an Israeli jail, Dweik, according to some MPs, tried several times to get in touch with Mahmud ‘Abbas to agree on a certain day for the resumption of his duties, but to no avail, though he had been repeatedly promised by the office of the President that ‘Abbas will personally get in touch with him. The MPs added that, according to an agreement with the PA, Qais Abdul Karim (Abu Laila) would declare Sunday 26/7/2009 as the scheduled day for Dweik’s resumption of duties, but, to their amazement, ‘Azzam al-Ahmad refused to allow this under the pretext that the announcement was a violation of the agreement, and insisted that another date should be agreed upon. However, according to another compromise, signed by some intermediaries and ‘Omar Abdul Razzaq, Mahmud al-Ramahi, ‘Abdul Rahman Zaidan and ‘Azzam al-Ahmad, it was agreed that Dweik, accompanied by the leaders of the parliamentary blocs, comes to office the next day, Monday 27/7/2009, at 10:00 am. But once more Fatah did not honor its word and Hamas MPs were surprised, on Thursday 23/7/2009, by the statements of some Fatah’s personalities, whom ‘Azzam al-Ahmad was among, that they withdrew from the agreement and which was confirmed on the next Monday.¹¹⁵ Fatah officially declared that Dweik’s presidency had “legally expired,” thus he will not be allowed to use the office of the presidency of the PLC.¹¹⁶

Meanwhile, a security officer fired at and injured the foot of the MP Hamid al-Bitawi,¹¹⁷ while another MP, Muna Mansour, was harassed and humiliated.¹¹⁸ Moreover, the security agents arrested Dweik’s personal escort and director of office, and denied him entrance to the headquarter of the PLC in Ramallah.¹¹⁹ The director of the office of MP Omar ‘Abdul Raziq was also arrested,¹²⁰ while the office of the MPs in Nablus was exposed to search and inconvenience.¹²¹ Hamas MPs in the WB accused the security forces of failure to implement the decisions of the Supreme Court, issued a month ago, that ordered the release of many detainees, while others were rearrested after their release.¹²²

The security forces admitted that they had confiscated within a few months \$8.5 million from members of Hamas on the grounds that the funds were used

to establish a security apparatus for Hamas in the WB.¹²³ But Hamas dismissed this excuse as sheer fabrication and lies, and accused the PA of embezzling funds allocated to Palestinian orphans and the families of the killed and the wounded. In addition, personal funds and properties of some elements of Hamas were also confiscated, as was the case with the businessman Ahmad al-Shunnar of Nablus, who was forced to relinquish the ownership of his own building, on the basis of the allegations that the real owner is Hamas.¹²⁴

In another vein, Hamas continued to accuse the PA in Ramallah of torturing its members in prisons, which led to the death of some of them, like Muhammad al-Haj in Jenin in February 2009,¹²⁵ Haytham ‘Amr in Hebron (*al-Khalil*) on 15/6/2009,¹²⁶ the clinical death of Kamal al-Sheikh in Fawwar refugee camp in July 2009¹²⁷ and Fadi Hamadneh in August 2009.¹²⁸ But a bloody clash in Qalqilyah between the security forces and three fighters of Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades, in which they, as well as three of the security officers, were killed,¹²⁹ had led to an outcry and aggravated the tension in the Palestinian arena. The minister of interior commented that the PA in Ramallah will not “allow groups of outlaws to threaten the security of the nation and the citizens.”¹³⁰ But Hamas accused the security forces of fabricating charges against its fighters, who were killed, “to cover up its awful crime and the culprits behind it, and to distort the credibility of the honored Palestinian national resistance.”¹³¹ Hassan Khreisheh warned that a campaign of internal mobilization among the members of the security forces had been actively conducted on the basis that these forces had been established to protect Israel and the Israelis, not to defend the Palestinian people.¹³²

The American funding to develop, train and qualify the Palestinian security forces had substantially increased from \$75 million in 2008 to \$130 million in 2009, an increase of almost 70%. Under the overall supervision of American Lieutenant General Keith Dayton, four battalions, about 1,600 men, were trained in a base in Jordan by American, Jordanian and Palestinian officers, and many of them were stationed in the cities of Jenin, Nablus and Hebron.¹³³ Meanwhile, work had been in progress to train six further battalions that are expected to graduate within two years, thus by then, a company of 10 battalions would be formed. Please note that details and nature of the training were fixed in coordination between the Israeli army and Jordan.¹³⁴



The Palestinian security sources in Ramallah emphasized that Dayton's role is strictly confined to training and qualifying the security forces, but he is not involved in any way in the formulation of the security policies, nor does he issue directives to the security authorities.¹³⁵ Salam Fayyad reiterated that the primary aim of the security forces is to confidently and persistently move forward to guarantee the end of the occupation, and to build a state of the institutions and the rule of law, first and foremost a strong security apparatus. The PA was elated that the last group of trainees, 700 in number, who graduated in June 2009, were trained in Jordan and by Palestinian trainers, not Americans, though Dayton and Jordanian officers were consulted.¹³⁶

Both the American and Palestinian sides admit close cooperation between the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the security forces in Ramallah, specifically the Preventive Security Service (PSS) and the General Intelligence Service, but they deny that the CIA administer or supervise these two institutions. However, a report published in the British newspaper *The Guardian* of 17/12/2009 maintained that the:

Palestinian security agents who have been detaining and allegedly torturing supporters of the Islamist organization Hamas in the West Bank have been working closely with the CIA... The relationship between the CIA and the two Palestinian agencies involved—Preventive Security Organization (PSO) and General Intelligence Service (GI)—is said by some western diplomats and other officials in the region to be so close that the American agency appears to be supervising the Palestinians' work. One senior western official said: 'The [Central Intelligence] Agency consider them as their property, those two Palestinian services.'¹³⁷

The security coordination between the PA in Ramallah and Israel had, in fact, continued in a strong and regular pattern. It took various forms: exchange of information, disclosure of the Palestinian resistance network, prohibition of operations against Israeli target, arrest of fighters involved in such operations, control of protest movements in such a way to avoid clashes with the Israeli forces, disclosure and confiscation of weapons, dismantling of roadside bombs, secure the safe return of Israelis who enter Palestinian territories and to return stolen Israeli cars.¹³⁸

The rise of the extreme right in Israel, the victory of the Likud Party under the leadership of Netanyahu in the general elections, the stagnation of the peace process and the repeated Israeli aggression on the ground had apparently weakened the enthusiasm of the PA in Ramallah on the security coordination with Israel. Though seemingly the Israelis were worried by this development, however, it was not translated on the ground.¹³⁹ For the security coordination had, in fact, continued even after some Israeli practices had placed the dignity and reputation of the Palestinian security itself at stake. On 20/11/2009, “Palestinian sources said Israel arrested five senior officials from the Palestinian General Intelligence Service... The officials include Mohammad Abdel Hamid, commander of intelligence in the West Bank town of Salfit.”¹⁴⁰ The Israelis, also, assassinated three activists of *Al-Aqsa* Martyrs’ Brigades in the Nablus area.¹⁴¹

In another vein, the security forces in GS managed to absorb the great shock of the Israeli attack on GS, whose brutality was experienced right in the first day of the war when the Israelis raided some 18 police stations killing about 240 police officers, besides the destruction of the infrastructure of the government institutions and the security forces.

Meanwhile the security in Gaza arrested during the war several supporters of Fatah in the Strip, who were charged of treason because of their presumed extension of vital security information to the Israeli enemy.¹⁴² Hamas admitted that it executed by firing squad 4% of the captured agents, including seven at one go, and fired at the feet of 10% of them.¹⁴³ Some of Hamas leaders accused the security forces in Ramallah and some members in Fatah of providing the enemy with a list of proposed targets in GS for bombardment. Moreover, they maintained that GS security intercepted messages between some of Fatah security members in GS and their leaders who fled to Ramallah, which revealed that the PA leadership asked for detailed maps of the houses of the leaders of Hamas and Ezzedeen AL-Qassam Brigades as well as weapon stores in GS. The captured Fatah agents had allegedly given detailed information of what they did.¹⁴⁴ But Fatah claimed that Hamas had exploited the war to harass and assassinate its members, including 17 of the Organization’s leadership cadres in GS. In response, Hamas maintained that those who were killed were agents who received capital punishment by the courts of law in GS before “the decisive military action.”¹⁴⁵

Meanwhile the authorities in GS continued to place Fatah and its supporters under surveillance, and, sometimes arrested some of them, who were charged of attempts to provoke chaos and lawlessness, and to assassinate some of Hamas leaders.¹⁴⁶ In reciprocal to Fatah's harassment of Hamas' supporters in the WB, Hamas arrested some of Fatah's supporters, once in a while, and imposed restrictions on the activities of Fatah in GS.¹⁴⁷ It arrested 76 Fatah members in June 2009,¹⁴⁸ while in the midst of December 26 were arrested.¹⁴⁹ However, as a gesture of good will and in an attempt to make the environment more conducive for the Palestinian reconciliation, the government of Haniiyah had occasionally released some of Fatah's detainees. In Ramadan, it freed a hundred detainees of whom 50 were Fatah members who were reportedly arrested for security reasons.¹⁵⁰

On 14/8/2009, from the Ibn Taymiyyah's mosque of Rafah city in Gaza, the spiritual leader of the group Jund Ansar Allah (JAA), 'Abdul-Latif Musa, declared Gaza an Islamic emirate. The government of Gaza opposed this move, and consequently very controversial clashes erupted between this JAA and the security forces, in which 28 were killed and 150 injured from both sides. Among the casualties were 'Abdul-Latif Musa himself and the founder and military commander of the group Abi 'Abdullah al-Suri, nicknamed al-Muhajir, as well as six of the security forces amongst whom was the leader of the eastern battalion of Ezzedeem AL-Qassam Brigades in Rafah Muhammad al-Shamali, and six citizens, while about a hundred of JAA were arrested.

Al-Suri was originally related to AL-Qassam Brigades, but his extreme Salafi inclination triggered him to dissent and form his own group, JAA. Hamas tried its utmost best to convince him to give up his new plan, but to no avail. However, some quarters in GS government and Hamas claimed that the JAA had been infiltrated, and that 'Abdul-Latif Musa and some of the group's members were coordinating with the security forces in Ramallah. They, including Musa, were in the pay roll of Ramallah's government, and had participated in the strikes and demonstration against the government of GS.¹⁵¹

The large number of casualties demonstrates the brutality of the confrontation, but the nearly ten-hour duration of the fighting had also indicated the ability of GS security apparatus to effectively and decisively deal with their adversaries. Most of the Palestinian factions expressed sorrow for the big toll of casualties, but Fatah

claimed that Hamas is squarely responsible for the emergence of such extremist groups in GS, and blamed the movement for unnecessarily employing extensive force in dealing with this group. Mahmud ‘Abbas described Hamas’ handling of the incident as “brutal, ugly and inhuman.”¹⁵² In response to these accusations, the government of Haniyyah maintained that it dealt with the incident in a responsible manner, that it gave sufficient room for intermediaries to settle the matter amicably, and that it was JAA that started the shooting and killing. Moreover, the government emphasized that it will “rehabilitate the group’s detainees to the Islamic centrist current and the right Islamic path.”¹⁵³ Four months later, Isma‘il Haniyyah ordered the release of all the detainees of this Rafah incidents.¹⁵⁴

Detailed statistics on the violations of human rights in both GS and Ramallah are not available. However, The Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR):

received a total of 3,442 complaints concerning violations of human rights and public freedoms in 2009 including 2,449 in the West Bank and 993 in Gaza Strip... The complaints were distributed as follows: 60% were related to security agencies and 40% to civil agencies. [In WB] ICHR received more than 2,207 complaints about the violation of detainees rights of which 581 complaints regarding detainees arrested on political grounds. About 252 complaints were related to violations of the right to physical safety, which focused on patterns and methods of torture... [In GS] ICHR received 993 complaints... with the highest percentage of complaints aiming the security agencies, amounting to 712 complaints... 236 complaints were linked to detention based on political affiliation. Violations of the right to physical safety totaled 252 and focused on many forms and patterns and method of torture...¹⁵⁵

The above commission had also given statistics of cases of killing or death outside the law orbit in the WB and GS. Amongst those were 36 caused by intra-fighting, 11 in prison and 4 because of cooperation with the enemy. We should, however, caution that the commission included in these statistics 62 casualties in the tunnels between GS and the Egyptian borders, though these were due to different reasons (see table 2/1).¹⁵⁶

Table 2/1: Classifications of Those Killed Outside Legal Channels According to the Region and Killing Background 2009

Basis of killing	WB			GS			Total
	Total	Children	Women	Total	Children	Women	
Family quarrels	26	5	4	15	2	1	41
Misuse of arms by those charged with law enforcement	2	-	1	1	-	-	3
Misuse of arms by citizens	3	-	1	11	7	3	14
Mysterious circumstances	10	1	2	23	2	-	33
Honor killings	4	2	4	5	1	5	9
Collaboration with the enemy	-	-	-	4	-	-	4
Internal fighting	8	-	-	28	4	1	36
Tunnel deaths	-	-	-	62	3	-	62
Negligence and not maintaining public safety	13	11	5	11	1	3	24
Deaths of detainees	3	-	-	8	-	-	11
Total	69	19	17	168	20	13	237

Eighth: Repercussions of the War on GS and Goldstone Report

Like its predecessor of 2008, *The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10* will address the war on Gaza (27/12/2008–18/1/2009) from different angles. What concern us here are some indicators related to the internal situation, particularly with regard to Goldstone Report.

The immediate impacts of the war on GS on the domestic situation may be summarized in the following points:

1. The increasing popularity of Hamas and the resistance movements, as well as the rising support to the strategy and options of the resistance.
2. The decline in the popularity of Fatah and the PA in Ramallah, and their exposition to severe criticism,

3. The retrogression in the popularity of the peace option and the increasing hostility to Israel.
4. The increasing calls for national dialogue and reconciliation, bypass of internal differences, formation of a government of national unity and the reform of the PLO.
5. Earnest and repeated calls for the mutual stoppage of media campaigns, and the release of political detainees.
6. Increasing calls for solidarity to lift the blockade and to pursue the reconstruction of GS.
7. Aggravation of the people' hardship resulting from the huge casualties—dead and wounded—destruction of thousands of houses and the expulsion of tens of thousands of the population.
8. The increasing economic, political, social and security complexities confronting the government of GS in dealing with the war and its repercussions.

During and after the war there was a barrage of blaming and finger-pointing between Fatah and Hamas. Fatah leadership held Hamas squarely responsible for what happened, and some did not initially conceal their desire in the downfall of Hamas rule in GS. On more than one occasion, Mahmud 'Abbas had bitterly and sarcastically condemned the performance of Hamas leaders during the war. He accused them of hiding themselves and of "escaping in ambulances to Sinai, abandoning our people to be slaughtered."¹⁵⁷ It is really perplexing that such a dignitary like the Palestinian president utters claims that he very well knows that they are false and easy to checkup? 'Abbas had also accused Hamas of offering a price of one thousand euros for families of those killed, 500 euros for each one wounded, and the owners of destroyed homes would receive four thousand euros to help rebuilding work. He also wondered, "Is this what we want to our people? We take them to the massacre, and then say come over you injured father, you bereaved mother, take one thousand euros a price for your son who had been killed for unknown reasons?"¹⁵⁸ No doubt, Hamas did not say to the fathers and mothers of the killed that "The Price" of your son is a thousand euros. Fatah and Hamas extend these amounts out of limited funds, and as a symbol of condolence to the relatives of the victims, which is a very well known and practical social custom. Moreover, there is no Palestinian whatsoever who does not know why the Israelis kill his/ her son or any of his/ her relatives.



Meanwhile, a number of Hamas leaders accused some quarters in Fatah of participating in the war through providing information to the enemy, and by updating the bank of targets in GS to be attacked by the Israeli army. They accused President 'Abbas himself of knowing beforehand of the attack on GS, even he allegedly incited the Israelis to do so. In this respect, they said that 'Abbas "took part in the war through his agents who identified to the Israelis Hamas [members] houses in GS."¹⁵⁹ Hamas had, moreover, adamantly refused to allow 'Abbas and the PA in Ramallah to represent or speak on behalf of GS, emphasizing that 'Abbas has no right to negotiate on what the religious warriors (*mujahidun*) are achieving in the battlefield by their own blood and sacrifices.¹⁶⁰ Hamas also refused the calls of Abu Mazin for individual consent to the Egyptian initiative to stop the war on GS. This initiative, in Hamas' view, did not explicitly condemn the Israeli aggression, distinguish between the killer and the victim, clearly demand the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the Strip, and, above all, did not directly deal with Hamas and its government, i.e., the Palestinian party that administers and defends GS.

Notwithstanding the position of some of its leaders, Fatah had, on the whole, supported the resistance and its steadfastness during the Israeli aggression. It shelved its 44th anniversary celebrations and called for unity and the formation of a government of national consensus to shoulder the reconstruction of GS and the distribution of the aid. Moreover, the Central Committee of Fatah declared its readiness for dialogue without conditions and external pressure.¹⁶¹ Meanwhile, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* reported that Israel may return GS to the PA in Ramallah if the former controls it, on which a member of Hamas political bureau defiantly remarked, "Who assumes that he will return aboard an Israeli tank, is misled."¹⁶² In response, Fatah leader Sa'ib 'Uraiqtat said that if Israel waits for one thousand years, the PA will not return to rule GS on its tanks. We have quitted because of differences, and will not return except by consensus.¹⁶³

'Abbas turned down an invitation by the Qatari Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Al-Thani to attend an emergency Arab summit in Doha on 16/1/2009 to discuss the Israeli aggression on Gaza, excusing himself by saying that if he attends "he will be slaughtered from one vein to another."¹⁶⁴ Hence, Qatar invited the representatives of the resistance, and Khalid Mish'al delivered in the Summit's inaugural session the speech of Hamas and the resistance, which provoked on one side the issue of who has the right of representing the Palestinians, and was, on the other side, a tremendous political victory to Hamas and its government in

GS. But this episode infuriated the Palestinian presidency, who authorized some of its advisors to strongly express Ramallah's fury and dismay. Yasser 'Abed Rabbo bitterly said that the Qatari prince had stepped over the red lines,¹⁶⁵ while other Fatah leaders maintained that the Qatari invitations to the leaders of the factions has deepened the schism, and that they represent a bias towards Hamas, and an attempt to have a regional axis at the expense of the Palestinians.¹⁶⁶

Hamas has consistently argued that it gained effective and popular legitimacy through its election victory and the capture of the majority seats in the PLC. Moreover, it felt that its dismissed government is the legitimate administration that should run the affairs until the formation of a new government. Besides, Mahmud 'Abbas' term of the Presidency had already expired by virtue of the Palestinian Basic Law. Hamas was furious of being deprived from all access to the PLO and by the total Fatah control of the Organization, even years after the constitutional expiry of the terms and functions of its councils. That's because it was the force that defended—alongside the resistance forces—the Palestinian people in GS and the ones who made Israel fail in achieving any of its aims in the war on GS. Hamas fury was also due to the ongoing suffocating siege of GS, and its calculated and deliberate isolation at the Arab and international levels. This frustration, coupled with the elation resulting from victory in the Gaza war, had triggered Hamas to call for a new national authority. This provoked, as mentioned above, turmoil on the Palestinian scene. However, this uproar was absorbed through the dialogue sessions that placed the reform of the PLO as a priority on the agenda of the issues under discussion by the Palestinian factions.

Goldstone Report

The scandal of demanding to postpone the vote on Goldstone Report had profoundly embarrassed and confused the PA in Ramallah. Besides, it aggravated tension, widened the crisis of confidence within the Palestinian arena and poisoned the environment of the reconciliation, which had ultimately led to the postponement and complication of the endorsement of the Egyptian document.

In April 2009, the United Nations HRC, which is composed of 47 states, formed a mission headed by the South African judge, Richard Goldstone, to investigate the Israeli war on Gaza. The 452 page report, issued in mid September 2009, condemned what it considered the Israeli collective punishment on the people of the GS, found the conduct of the Israeli armed forces constitutes grave breaches of the

Fourth Geneva Convention which sought to guarantee the protection of civilians. The Report had, moreover, charged Israel with deliberate killing and torture, extensive destruction of property, employing the Palestinians as human shields, and deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects (individuals, whole families, houses and mosques) without any military rationale for such violent actions. The Report came to the conclusion that some of these acts would constitute war crimes and may amount to crimes against humanity. Simultaneously, the report accused, and in more precise wording, the Palestinian armed groups of having caused terror, of deliberately attacking civilian population and that these actions would constitute war crimes and may amount to crimes against humanity. The report recommended that the UN Security Council should require Israel to launch investigations into these serious allegations. Israel and the relevant authorities in GS to launch appropriate investigations and a committee of experts should report at the end of six-month period to the Security Council on its assessment of relevant domestic proceedings..., otherwise they will refer the situation in GS to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC).¹⁶⁷ The significance of this Report is that it was issued by an official international body, and that it provides a road map, so to speak, that will probably hold Israel and several of its political and military leaders accountable to what they did in front of international courts, and in a number of European countries whose Judicial systems allow the tracking of war criminals.

The PA, through Ibrahim Khraishi, the permanent observer of Palestine to the United Nations Office at Geneva, agreed late Thursday night to delay until March a vote set for Friday, on 2/10/2009, at the HRC in Geneva that would have endorsed the Goldstone Report. The pretexts given by the PA for this delay appeared to be confused and contradictory. In a nutshell, the excuse was that this delay was demanded by the major powers and Europe, as well as other blocks in the Council, including Arab, Islamic, African and Non-Aligned countries, because a longer time was allegedly needed to closely and meticulously study the Report.¹⁶⁸ Mahmud ‘Abbas claimed that the PA has no right “to present, withdraw or postpone a request, because it is just an observer-member in both the Human Rights Council and the United Nations.”¹⁶⁹

But the decision of the PA in this respect has shocked many quarters that cared for the Palestinian issue, and the justification was not convincing to them. Thus, a great media uproar and extensive public anger had erupted, particularly so when it was revealed that the delay was on the demand of the PA, that the pro-Palestinian

blocks—Arab, Islamic and the non-alliance countries—had simply yielded to the desire of the Authority, and that the draft decision would have passed by a comfortable majority, about 33 members. Moreover, in an interview with al-Arabiya News Channel, dated 8/10/2009, Nasir al-Qudwah, a member of Fatah Central Committee and a former representative of the PLO in the UN, who has wealth of experience on this issue of voting and coordination mechanisms, said that it is very well known that in matters related to the Palestinian issue “the decision is the prerogative of the Authority,” that it had committed a blunder by asking for postponement, and that the Arab countries had nothing to do with the decision.

There were persistent news that the PA was subjected to huge Israeli-American pressure, whereby the “Americans argued that pushing the report now [then] would derail the Middle East peace process that they are trying to revive.”¹⁷⁰ It was also rumored that Israel had threatened and blackmailed the Authority through visits that Israeli security and military officials paid to Ramallah, where they threatened ‘Abbas to release some audio and video recordings that reportedly establish his role in the war on GS. Moreover, the director of the Israel Security Agency—ISA (Shabak), Yuval Diskin, visited ‘Abbas’ headquarter just one day before the postponement of the vote on the report, and told ‘Abbas that “if he did not ask for a deferral of the vote on the critical report on last year’s military operation, Israel would turn the West Bank into a ‘second Gaza.’”¹⁷¹

However, with these strong accusations against the president and the leadership of the PA in Ramallah, and under considerable pressure from the Executive Committee of the PLO and the Central Committee of Fatah, President ‘Abbas ordered the formation of a committee headed by Hanna ‘Omeira, a member of the Executive Committee of the PLO, to investigate the circumstances and conditions that led to the shelving of the decision.¹⁷² But this directive perplexed many observers, including two members of Fatah Executive Committee, ‘Abdul Rahim Mallouh and Ghassan al-Shak‘a, who expressed their astonishment that the formation of this committee was announced by Yasser ‘Abed Rabbo, even though the issue was not deliberated in the Executive Committee. Moreover, it is worth noting that the committee was asked to know the reasons for the postponement, and not to pinpoint and hold accountable who is behind it.¹⁷³ Perhaps this ambiguity was because President Mahmud ‘Abbas had personally taken the decision, particularly so because there had been wrangling within the Executive Committees of the PLO and Fatah that accused President ‘Abbas of yielding to pressure to withdraw the report.¹⁷⁴



Muhammad Hourani, a senior Fatah member, maintained that there is a consensus among the Fatah seniors that the presidency is responsible for withdrawing the report.¹⁷⁵ But another leader of Fatah and a member of its Central Council, Nabil ‘Amr, had explicitly and openly held President ‘Abbas personally and squarely responsible for the postponement.¹⁷⁶

President ‘Abbas and the PA have not expected such furious reactions and wide condemnation of this postponement. However, they did their utmost best to absorb the anger and to overcome the crisis. Under pressure, they admitted the mistake, Ibrahim Khraishi, the permanent observer of Palestine to the United Nations Office at Geneva, said, “This is a mistake, we did not expect these reactions, particularly at the Palestinian popular level,” and added that confusion had accompanied the discussions for postponement, for which “the Palestinian leadership” is considered responsible.¹⁷⁷

Officially, Fatah opposed the postponement,¹⁷⁸ but it rejected Hamas’ “exploitation” of the matter. Though several of Fatah leaders had publicly voiced their anger, the Organization did not take any measure to disclose and punish the culprit. All the Palestinian factions, including PIJ, PFLP, DFLP and PFLP-General Command (PFLP-GC), also condemned the postponement. In addition, Bassem Khoury reportedly resigned from the cabinet, as economy minister, in protest.¹⁷⁹

Initially, Hamas’ position towards Goldstone Report was not clear and decisive; it alternated between endorsement and reservation. Isma‘il Haniyyah, the premier of the government in GS, welcomed the report, which, in his words, “showed clear condemnation of the Israeli occupation for committing war crimes in the besieged Gaza Strip.” Similarly, Hamas spokesperson Fawzi Barhoum said that this report is an additional and absolute evidence of the war crimes that the occupation committed in GS, and that the international community is required “to prosecute Israeli officials as war criminals.”¹⁸⁰ But another leader of Hamas, Isma‘il Radwan, maintained that “the report is political in nature, unbalanced, unfair and not objective because it equated between the murderer and the victim,” and that it tried “to appease the Zionist enemy by accusing the resistance and Hamas of committing war crimes.”¹⁸¹ ‘Izzat al-Rishq, A member of Hamas political bureau, argued that the report “has positive aspects through its emphasis that the Zionist entity has committed crimes against humanity,” but he criticized the other part of the report which “equated between the killer and the victim by making false

accusations against Hamas.”¹⁸² However, Hamas had soon used strong language to condemn the postponement of the report, while it tactically underplayed its shortcomings in the hope that this will encourage the endorsement of the report, and thus provides a probable opportunity to hold Israeli leaders accountable and to prosecute them for their crimes in GS. Initially, President ‘Abbas and several leaders of the PA drew attention to Hamas’ objections to the report, and accused the movement of political blackmailing. But Hamas distinguished between its objections to the accusations recorded in the report against it, and its unanimous position against the postponement of the voting, and to held accountable those in the Authority who were behind the shelving.

Khalid Mish‘al dismissed the position of the Authority as “shameful,” “cheap” and “disgraceful,” and added that the “blood of children and women that was shed in Gaza will curse those who sacrificed the blood of the Palestinians.”¹⁸³ Isma‘il Haniyyah described this episode as “unprecedented negligence of the blood of the martyrs and the rights of the Palestinian people,” and he viewed the deferral of the vote as “reckless, a political and national crime, a great harm to the Palestinian reconciliation.”¹⁸⁴ An official communiqué of the dismissed government in GS considered the postponement of the vote on the report a “dangerous crime,”¹⁸⁵ while Muhammad Nazzal of Hamas described the deferral as “defeatist and immoral.”¹⁸⁶ This spirit of anger and condemnation was also expressed by many other leaders of Hamas.

‘Izzat al-Rishq maintained that Hamas viewed ‘Abbas’ formation of the investigation committee as “a blatant and theatrical move to cover up his suspected role in the postponement,”¹⁸⁷ “a piece of eye wash,” and “a personal attempt to evade responsibility.”¹⁸⁸ As emphasized by its leaders Mahmud al-Zahhar, Osama Hamdan and others, Hamas was of the conviction that the decision of postponing the voting had its negative impact on the prospects of the reconciliation document.¹⁸⁹

However, to air the extensive political tension, and under pressure from different quarters, the PA in Ramallah demanded that the Report be discussed in an emergency session of the United Nations HRC.¹⁹⁰ Moreover, in a further attempt to absorb the fury, restore the initiative and corner Hamas, the PA signed the Egyptian document. On 16/10/2009 the HRC endorsed the Goldstone Report by a large majority, which was enthusiastically welcomed by the PA in Ramallah and the government of GS, and by Fatah, Hamas and the other Palestinian factions.

The decision was also widely commended in the Arab and Islamic worlds, and internationally by the supporters of human rights in general and the rights of the Palestinian people, in particular.¹⁹¹

The budging of the PA within only two weeks and its admittance of the mistake demonstrates the extensive power and impact of the popular opinion and the media. It also shows the profound fury and anger that dominated the Palestinian street. Nonetheless, since nobody was held accountable for the postponement, and Fatah had by one way or another regained the initiative, the popular and media campaign had a long way to go to achieve its desired objectives through a systematic, organized and continuous drive and strife. Moreover, this development had also shown that there is still room for the political leadership to bet on the “weak memory” of its peoples to return to the stagnant status quo ante.

Conclusion

The Palestinian internal scene is still experiencing disarray and schism, which negatively affect all aspects of the national program, and the Palestinian struggle at all levels—local, Arab and international. The differences between Fatah and Hamas and the governments of Ramallah and GS are essentially a reflection of a deep political and ideological conflict. It is essentially a dispute between two visions that have not been thus far able to reconcile over issues that are related to the priorities of the national struggle, the way of administering the struggle with the occupation, the paths of resistance and peace, and the acclimatization with the Arab and international legitimacies.

The steadfastness and bravery of the resistance during the war on Gaza (27/12/2008–18/1/2009) was a tremendous popular political and media boost to Hamas and its government, and to the resistance trend. On the other hand, it triggered a sense of helplessness among the enemies and adversaries of Hamas to topple it by force. It was also an impetus to go ahead with the national dialogue. Meanwhile, the performance of the PLO and the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah was so colorless and weak, that it was not in line with the huge challenges of the war and its aftermath. But the glamour of “steadfastness and victory” had soon been absorbed by a handicapped Palestinian, Arab and international environment that was incapable of building on it. Thus, the wound of the Gazans was allowed

“to bleed and rot.” As for the financial aid allocated for the reconstruction of GS, it was not only denied access to the Strip, but was also used to politically pressurize and blackmail the dismissed Hamas government.

However, the war improved the reconciliation environment. Egypt patronized the dialogue which had substantially progressed, particularly between Fatah and Hamas. But Hamas raised some objections to the final draft of the Egyptian reconciliation document on the grounds that some important agreed upon issues were changed or amended. But the Egyptian government and Fatah, who had already signed the document, refused any review of the paper, and the reconciliation process had once more stalled.

The predicament of legitimacies—be them incomplete, non-existing or prohibited—continues to be a major issue of contention in Palestine. This is particularly so with regard to the PNC, the Central Council and the Executive Committee of Fatah, the Emergency Government in Ramallah and the Caretaker Government in GS. Such complexities glaringly show, at least on the administrative level, that the reform process requires that the entire Palestinian house be put in order, and that this should not stop with the conduct of elections or the formation of a provisional government.

After a long awaiting of 20 years, Fatah had, finally, convened its sixth congress, in which it managed, with formidable difficulties, to reorganize its internal affairs. ‘Abbas and his supporters emerged victorious, while some of the historical leaders, notably Faruq Qaddumi, were excluded, the domestic trend superseded its Diaspora counterpart, and both the security forces and the pro-peace trend acquired a considerable status in the Organization. However, Fatah has a long way to go on the organizational aspect, its fight of internal corruption, fixation of strategic paths and renewal of its cadres.

The performance of the Presidency and the Authority in Ramallah on Goldstone Report had profoundly embarrassed them. For their demand, under Israeli-American pressure, to postpone its discussion and voting for a further six months, had exposed them to an outcry, extreme fury, and a series of bitter accusations within Palestinian, Arab and Islamic sectors. However, after chaotic confusion and counter accusations, the Presidency and the Authority in Ramallah were compelled to ask that the report be voted on. This revealed the crucial importance of public awareness and effective media campaigns in the pursuit of national aspirations.



Nothing much or new had been achieved during the year 2009, on the level of reorganizing the Palestinian house, and neither had, in 2010, a successful national reconciliation, free and fair elections and the reorganization of the PLO and its institutions been achieved. Whereas making, the achievement of a meaningful reconciliation that effectively promotes the Palestinian national project will continue to be at stake. This will be the case, as long as the options of the resistance and the peace path are not conclusively settled, and the external factor is instrumental in the Palestinian decision.

Endnotes

- ¹ *Addustour* newspaper, Amman, 23/1/2009.
- ² *Al-Hayat* newspaper, London, 8/3/2009.
- ³ *Asharq Alawsat* newspaper, London, 9/3/2009.
- ⁴ *Al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper, London, 9/3/2009.
- ⁵ *Addustour*, 9/5/2009.
- ⁶ *Alrai* newspaper, Amman, 13/5/2009.
- ⁷ *Al-Hayat*, 20/5/2009.
- ⁸ See *al-Quds al-Arabi* and *al-Khaleej* newspaper, al-Shariqa, 21/5/2009.
- ⁹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 9/7/2009; and see also site of Aljazeera.net, 30/8/2009.
- ¹⁰ Quds Press International News Agency, London, 19/5/2009.
- ¹¹ *Al-Hayat*, 21/5/2009.
- ¹² *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 21/5/2009.
- ¹³ *Al-Hayat*, 23/6/2009.
- ¹⁴ See Reuters News Agency, 24/8/2009; and *al-Hayat*, 26/8/2009.
- ¹⁵ See *Asharq Alawsat*, 27/8/2009 and 1/9/2009.
- ¹⁶ *Haaretz* newspaper, 14/8/2009.
- ¹⁷ *Alittihad* newspaper, Abu Dhabi, 27/12/2009.
- ¹⁸ *Al-Hayat*, 2/3/2009.
- ¹⁹ *Al-Hayat*, 21/5/2009.
- ²⁰ See the study of the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR) on the financial situation in Gaza (Arabic), <http://www.pecdar.ps/userfiles/file/emp.%20report.pdf>
- ²¹ *Felesteen* newspaper, Gaza, 13/4/2009.
- ²² *Al-Hayat*, 22/1/2009.
- ²³ See *al-Hayat* and *Alarab* newspaper, Doha, 26/1/2009.
- ²⁴ *Felesteen*, 2/3/2009.
- ²⁵ See *al-Hayat*, 19/2/2009.
- ²⁶ See *Felesteen*, 23/2/2009.
- ²⁷ *Al-Hayat*, 24/2/2009.
- ²⁸ See the statement of Khalil al-Hayyah, *Felesteen*, 12/11/2008.
- ²⁹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 9/3/2009.
- ³⁰ *Al-Hayat*, 1/3/2009.
- ³¹ *Felesteen*, 19/3/2009.
- ³² See *Asharq Alawsat*, 11/7/2009; and the statement of Mahmud Zahhar, *Alarab*, 11/7/2009; and the statement of Khalil al-Hayyah, Quds Press, 13/7/2009.
- ³³ *Al-Hayat*, 20/8/2009.
- ³⁴ See for example the statement of Mahmud 'Abbas, *al-Ayyam* newspaper, Ramallah, 1/3/2009; and his statement in *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 9/3/2009; and the statement of Sa'ib 'Uraiqat in *Al-Hayat al-Jadida* newspaper, Ramallah, 9/6/2009.

- ³⁵ See the statement of Isma‘il Radwan, *Asharq Alawsat*, 11/4/2009; and the statement of Khalil al-Hayyah, *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 20/4/2009; and see *al-Hayat*, 4/6/2009.
- ³⁶ *Al-Khaleej*, 22/3/2009; and see the statement of Rabah Mohanna concerning the suggestion of the PFLP, *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 28/3/2009; and *Asharq Alawsat*, 11/4/2009.
- ³⁷ See the statement of Mahmud al-Ramahi, *al-Khaleej*, 20/7/2009; and see also the statement of Hasan Khraishi, *Asharq Alawsat*, 5/7/2009.
- ³⁸ *Felesteen*, 10/6/2009.
- ³⁹ See *al-Khaleej*, 8/7/2009; and *Alarab* 18–19/8/2009; and *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 19/8/2009.
- ⁴⁰ *Asharq Alawsat*, 2/7/2009.
- ⁴¹ *Al-Hayat*, 2/7/2009.
- ⁴² See the statement of ‘Izzat al-Rishq, Quds Press, 2/10/2009; and the statement of Isma‘il Haniyyah, *al-Ayyam*, Ramallah, 8/10/2009.
- ⁴³ See *al-Hayat*, 8 and 11/10/2009; and *al-Akhbar* newspaper, Beirut, 9/10/2009.
- ⁴⁴ *Almustaqbal* newspaper, Beirut, 12/10/2009.
- ⁴⁵ *Al-Quds al-Arabi* and *al-Hayat*, 15/10/2009.
- ⁴⁶ *Assafir* newspaper, Beirut, 13/10/2009.
- ⁴⁷ *Al-Khaleej*, 15/10/2009.
- ⁴⁸ For Hamas’s remarks on the Egyptian paper see Aljazeera.net, 18–19/10/2009; and *Asharq Alawsat*, 20/10/2009; and *al-Sharq*, Doha, 23/10/2009; and *al-Hayat*, 26/10/2009.
- ⁴⁹ See, for example, the statement of Osama Hamdan, Quds Press, 7/1/2009; and the statement of Musa Abu Marzuq, *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 10/1/2009.
- ⁵⁰ Palestine News Agency (Wafa), 23/10/2009.
- ⁵¹ Reuters, 25/10/2009.
- ⁵² *Al-Ayyam*, Ramallah, 25/10/2009.
- ⁵³ *Felesteen*, 25/10/2009.
- ⁵⁴ *Al-Hayat*, 25/10/2009.
- ⁵⁵ *Almustaqbal*, 25/10/2009.
- ⁵⁶ Site of Arabs 48, 23/10/2009.
- ⁵⁷ *Al-Hayat*, 25/10/2009.
- ⁵⁸ Site of The Palestinian Information Center (PIC), 24/10/2009.
- ⁵⁹ *Al-Ahram* newspaper, Cairo, 30/10/2009.
- ⁶⁰ *Al-Hayat*, 13/11/2009.
- ⁶¹ Wafa, 5/11/2009.
- ⁶² *Al-Hayat*, 6/11/2009.
- ⁶³ For the support of the Executive Committee of the PLO see *al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 6/11/2009; and for the support of the Fatah’s Revolutionary Council see *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 9/11/2009; and for the support of the presidents of Israel, USA and Egypt and the king of Jordan see *Almustaqbal*, 6/11/2009.
- ⁶⁴ Reuters, 25/11/2009.
- ⁶⁵ *Al-Hayat*, 17/12/2009.
- ⁶⁶ See for example the statement of Fawzi Barhoum, *Felesteen*, 17/12/2009; and the statement of Musa Abu Marzuq, *Assabeel* newspaper, Amman, 26/12/2009.

- ⁶⁷ *Felesteen*, 29/1/2009.
- ⁶⁸ The statement of Sa'ib 'Uraiqat, *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 30/1/2009.
- ⁶⁹ The statement of Hussein al-Sheikh, *Asharq Alawsat*, 30/1/2009.
- ⁷⁰ The statement of 'Azzam al-Ahmad, Aljazeera.net, 29/1/2009.
- ⁷¹ From the communiqué of the PNC, *al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 1/2/2009.
- ⁷² *Al-Hayat*, 4/2/2009.
- ⁷³ *Asharq Alawsat*, 3/2/2009.
- ⁷⁴ For Hamas's position, see the statement of Sami Abu Zuhri, *al-Khaleej*, 18/8/2009; and the communiqué Palestinian Government in the GS, PIC, 18/8/2009; and Hamas's communiqué, *Okaz* newspaper, Jeddah, 22/8/2009.
- ⁷⁵ *Al-Hayat*, 25/8/2009.
- ⁷⁶ Wafa, 26/8/2009; and see *al-Hayat* and *Asharq Alawsat*, 27/8/2009.
- ⁷⁷ See *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 27/8/2009.
- ⁷⁸ *Al-Khaleej*, 29/8/2009.
- ⁷⁹ Wafa, 26/8/2009.
- ⁸⁰ *Alghad* newspaper, Amman, 28/8/2009.
- ⁸¹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 13/4/2009.
- ⁸² *Alghad*, 22/4/2009.
- ⁸³ *Alghad*, 11 and 13/5/2009.
- ⁸⁴ See *Asharq Alawsat*, 12/5/2009; and *Alghad* and *al-Khaleej*, 11/5/2009.
- ⁸⁵ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 13/5/2009.
- ⁸⁶ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 16/5/2009.
- ⁸⁷ *Asharq Alawsat*, 6/6/2009.
- ⁸⁸ *Alghad*, 15/6/2009.
- ⁸⁹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 6/7/2009.
- ⁹⁰ Quds Press, 12/7/2009; and Aljazeera.net, 15/7/2009.
- ⁹¹ *Al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 14/7/2009.
- ⁹² *Asharq Alawsat*, 15/7/2009.
- ⁹³ *Alghad*, 17/7/2009.
- ⁹⁴ *Alghad*, 11/5/2009.
- ⁹⁵ *Asharq Alawsat*, 1/8/2009.
- ⁹⁶ See the statement of Faisal Abu Shahla, *Asharq Alawsat*, 2/8/2009.
- ⁹⁷ *Al-Ayyam*, Ramallah, 9/8/2009.
- ⁹⁸ There were lots of news and press releases on prohibiting Fatah's representatives in GS from participating in the conference, especially in the days preceding and during the conference.
- ⁹⁹ *Al-Khaleej*, 10/8/2009.
- ¹⁰⁰ *Al-Khaleej*, 13/8/2009.
- ¹⁰¹ *Asharq Alawsat*, 20/10/2009.
- ¹⁰² Ma'an News Agency, 13/4/2010.
- ¹⁰³ *Al-Hayat* and *al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 16/8/2009.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 13/8/2009.

- ¹⁰⁵ See for example *al-Hayat*, 3/1/2009; and *Asharq Alawsat*, 8 and 10/1/2009.
- ¹⁰⁶ The statement of Ra'fat Nasif, *Felesteen*, 22/1/2009.
- ¹⁰⁷ The statement of Ra'fat Nasif, *Asharq Alawsat*, 25/1/2009.
- ¹⁰⁸ *Felesteen*, 20/2/2009.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Asharq Alawsat*, 25/2/2009.
- ¹¹⁰ Ma'an, 12/3/2009.
- ¹¹¹ *Asharq Alawsat*, 11/6/2009.
- ¹¹² See *al-Quds al-Arabi* and *al-Hayat*, 13/6/2009.
- ¹¹³ *Felesteen*, 3/7/2009.
- ¹¹⁴ See *Felesteen*, 16 and 17/12/2009.
- ¹¹⁵ *Felesteen*, 29/7/2009.
- ¹¹⁶ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 25/7/2009.
- ¹¹⁷ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 20/4/2009.
- ¹¹⁸ PIC, 29/11/2009.
- ¹¹⁹ Quds Press, 4/7/2009.
- ¹²⁰ *Felesteen*, 15/9/2009.
- ¹²¹ *Assabeel*, 13/11/2009.
- ¹²² *Assabeel*, 13/10/2009.
- ¹²³ *Al-Hayat*, 6/7/2009.
- ¹²⁴ See *al-Hayat*, 7/7/2009.
- ¹²⁵ *Felesteen*, 11/2/2009.
- ¹²⁶ *Asharq Alawsat*, 16/6/2009.
- ¹²⁷ *Asharq Alawsat*, 28/7/2009.
- ¹²⁸ *Al-Hayat*, 12/8/2009.
- ¹²⁹ Sama News Agency, 31/5/2009.
- ¹³⁰ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 5/6/2009.
- ¹³¹ *Felesteen*, 9/6/2009.
- ¹³² *Felesteen*, 2/6/2009.
- ¹³³ See *al-Khaleej*, 6/3/2009; and *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 7/7/2009.
- ¹³⁴ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 9/6/2009 and 7/7/2009.
- ¹³⁵ 'Adnan al-Damiri, the spokesman of the security forces, *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 9/6/2009.
- ¹³⁶ *Asharq Alawsat*, 17/6/2009.
- ¹³⁷ *The Guardian* newspaper, London, 17/12/2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/dec/17/cia-palestinian-security-agents>
- ¹³⁸ See for example a statement issued by an Israeli source, *Arabs* 48, 12/4/2009; and Quds Press, 7/7/2009 quoting Hebrew radio; and *Alittihad*, 12/12/2009.
- ¹³⁹ See *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 16/12/2009.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Haaretz*, 20/11/2009.
- ¹⁴¹ Sama, 28/12/2009.
- ¹⁴² See PIC, 22/1/2009; and *Felesteen*, 11/2/2009; and *Alarab*, 4/2/2009.
- ¹⁴³ *Alghad*, 3/4/2009.

- ¹⁴⁴ PIC, 22/1/2009; and see *Alghad*, 13/5/2009.
- ¹⁴⁵ *Asharq Alawsat*, 25/1/2009.
- ¹⁴⁶ *Alarab*, 7/7/2009; and *Felesteen*, 7 and 18/7/2009; and Quds Press, 31/8/2009.
- ¹⁴⁷ See the statement of Fawzi Barhoum, *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 1/9/2009.
- ¹⁴⁸ *Al-Khaleej*, 8/6/2009.
- ¹⁴⁹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 15/12/2009.
- ¹⁵⁰ *Felesteen*, 20/8/2009.
- ¹⁵¹ The media have covered those events, especially during the period of 14–17/8/2009.
- ¹⁵² See *Assabeel* and *Albayan* newspaper, Dubai, 18/8/2009.
- ¹⁵³ See Quds Press, 22/8/2009.
- ¹⁵⁴ *Felesteen*, 20/12/2009.
- ¹⁵⁵ The Executive Summary of the Fifteenth Annual Report on the Status of Human Rights in Palestine, The Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), <http://www.ichr.ps/pdfs/e-exec15.pdf>
- ¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 276.
- ¹⁵⁷ Mahmud ‘Abbas speech in The Arab American University-Jenin (AAUJ), *al-Hayat*, 14/10/2009.
- ¹⁵⁸ *Asharq Alawsat*, 29/1/2009.
- ¹⁵⁹ See the statement of Isma‘il Radwan, Quds Press, 18/1/2009; and the statement of Salah al-Bardawil, *Alittihad*, 18/1/2009.
- ¹⁶⁰ See Quds Press, 13/1/2009.
- ¹⁶¹ See for example *Addustour*, 4/1/2009; and *al-Hayat al-Jadida*, 19/1/2009.
- ¹⁶² *Assabeel*, 6/1/2009.
- ¹⁶³ *Assafir*, 16/1/2009.
- ¹⁶⁴ *Assafir*, 17/1/2009.
- ¹⁶⁵ *Al-Hayat*, 17/1/2009.
- ¹⁶⁶ *Al-Hayat* and *Asharq Alawsat*, 17/1/2009.
- ¹⁶⁷ Report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, Human Rights Council, 12th session, General Assembly, United Nations (UN), 25/9/2009, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/12session/A-HRC-12-48.pdf>
- ¹⁶⁸ See for example the statement of Nabil Abu Rudaina, *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 3/10/2009.
- ¹⁶⁹ Wafa, 5/10/2009.
- ¹⁷⁰ *The New York Times* newspaper, 1/10/2009.
- ¹⁷¹ *Haaretz*, 17/1/2010; and al-Mustaqbal al-Arabi electronic newspaper, 4/10/2009.
- ¹⁷² See *al-Hayat* and *Asharq Alawsat*, 5/1/2009.
- ¹⁷³ See *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 6/10/2009.
- ¹⁷⁴ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 3/10/2009; and *Asharq Alawsat*, 5/10/2009.
- ¹⁷⁵ *Asharq Alawsat*, 9/10/2009.
- ¹⁷⁶ Aljazeera.net, 7/10/2009.
- ¹⁷⁷ *Asharq al-Awsat*, 10/10/2009; and see also the statement of Yasser ‘Abed Rabbo, *The Guardian*, 7/10/2009.
- ¹⁷⁸ See *Alghad* and *al-Ayyam*, Ramallah, 4/10/2009.
- ¹⁷⁹ *The Guardian*, 7/10/2009.

¹⁸⁰ *Al-Khaleej* and *al-Hayat*, 17/9/2009.

¹⁸¹ *Al-Watan* newspaper, Abha (Saudi Arabia), 16/9/2009; and *al-Khaleej*, 17/9/2009.

¹⁸² PIC, 19/9/2009.

¹⁸³ PIC, 2/10/2009.

¹⁸⁴ *Al-Khaleej* and *Alarab*, 6/10/2009.

¹⁸⁵ *Al-Hayat*, 4/10/2009.

¹⁸⁶ PIC, 3/10/2009.

¹⁸⁷ PIC, 4/10/2009.

¹⁸⁸ *Felesteen*, 8/10/2009.

¹⁸⁹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 7/10/2009; and *Assabeel*, 9/10/2009.

¹⁹⁰ *Asharq Alawsat*, 10/10/2009; and Aljazeera.net, 9/10/2009.

¹⁹¹ See PIC, 6/10/2009; and *al-Quds al-Arabi* and *al-Ayyam*, Ramallah, 17/10/2009; and *Asharq Alawsat*, 18/10/2009.

Chapter Two

The Israeli-Palestinian Scene

The Israeli-Palestinian Scene

Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian scene witnessed during 2009 a bundle of developments on the domestic, population, economic and security levels. The most prominent domestic and population developments were respectively the 18th Knesset elections and their consequent effects, and the continuous decline of Jewish immigration to Israel. Like the previous year 2009, recorded further repercussions of the global economic crisis on Israel. On the security level, the Israeli security institution had been absorbed in several obsessions related to its 2006 war on Lebanon, the war on GS (27/12/2008–18/1/2009) and the developments in the Iranian nuclear issue. The relation with the Palestinians was affected by the aggression on GS and the continuity of security coordination between the PA and the Israelis. However, no tangible developments were recorded during 2009 and 2010 on the peace process, and in the last quarter of 2010 the insistence of Israel on continuing the building and the expansion of settlements hampered the peace process.

This chapter attempts to give an analytical study of the Israeli-Palestinian scene with regard to the Israeli political map, the Israeli population, economic and security affairs, and the interaction of Israel with the internal Palestinian scene and the peace settlement process.

First: The Israeli Internal Political Scene

Israel had experienced during 2009 several developments, notably the continuation of the aggression on GS, the 18th Knesset elections, the formation of an ultra-right government headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, and the stalemate in the peace process with the Palestinians. Moreover, there was the release of Goldstone Report that recorded Israeli violations of international law, and its impact on Israel at the internal, regional and international levels. Israel had furthermore intensified its siege of GS and continued its settlement in Palestinian territories notwithstanding the call of the international community to stop this growing activity. Besides was

the escalation of extremism among various sectors of the Israeli society, and the discrimination against the 1948 Palestinians.

This chapter attempts to comprehensively study the overall developments and political changes in the Israeli internal scene during the year 2009.

1. The 18th Knesset Elections

All the three major Israeli political parties, Kadima, Labor and the Likud, expected to capitalize in the 18th Knesset elections the victories of the Israeli army in GS war. These and other Israeli parties had therefore insisted that the elections be held on their specified schedule, 10/2/2009, and had unanimously supported the war on Gaza and the drive to liquidate Hamas. However, the failure to achieve a decisive victory in this war and to dislodge Hamas from power had triggered various Israeli quarters to loudly call for the postponement of the elections.¹

The opinion polls conducted during the electioneering campaign suggested that the Likud's performance in the elections would supersede that of Kadima, and that the Yisrael Beiteinu (Israel is Our Home) will win a sufficient number of Knesset seats to be ahead of the Labor Party² and secure the third position. This means that the centrist parties, Kadima and the Labor, were unable to capitalize in their election campaigns the war on GS, that had been conducted by their own government—in alliance with some small parties—under the premiership of Ehud Olmert.

The outcome of the opinion polls, which had been subsequently confirmed by the election results, revealed the inclination of the Israeli street towards the right, even the extreme right, which called for the continuation of the war on Gaza.³

The programs of the political parties presented to the Israeli public on the eve of the elections showed that Yisrael Beiteinu placed national security at the top of Israeli's priorities, never accepted that the "eternal capital of Israel" be subject to any form of negotiations and supported the settlement activities. The Sephardic ultra-orthodox Jewish party Shas fully supported the settlement drive in the so-called "land of Israel," refused to allow Jerusalem to be an item of negotiations with the Palestinians and opposed Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories except when such a move leads to the rescue of the life of the Jews.⁴

The positions of the ultra-orthodox Ashkenazi party United Torah Judaism (*Yahadut HaTorah*), were similar to those of Shas, even more extremist on some issues.

The settlers' two parties, the National Union Party (*Halhud HaLeumi*) and the New National Religious Party (NRP) (Jewish Home) (*Habayit Hayehudi*), want to impede any attempt to freeze the settlements, and had even advocated the extension of the settlement projects to include Galilee and Negev in order to block Arab majority in these localities.

The 18th Knesset elections were conducted at a time when the two major Israeli parties, Likud and Labor, had suffered continuous weakness. Kadima maintained its parliamentary strength in these elections, as it won 28 seats out of the 120 Knesset seats and the Likud got 27 seats, while the Labor Party got 13 seats only. This indicates weakness and decline in the popularity of the major traditional-ideological parties, and their failure to win a clear parliamentary majority (Here, we take into consideration that Kadima members are ex-members of the traditional parties).⁵

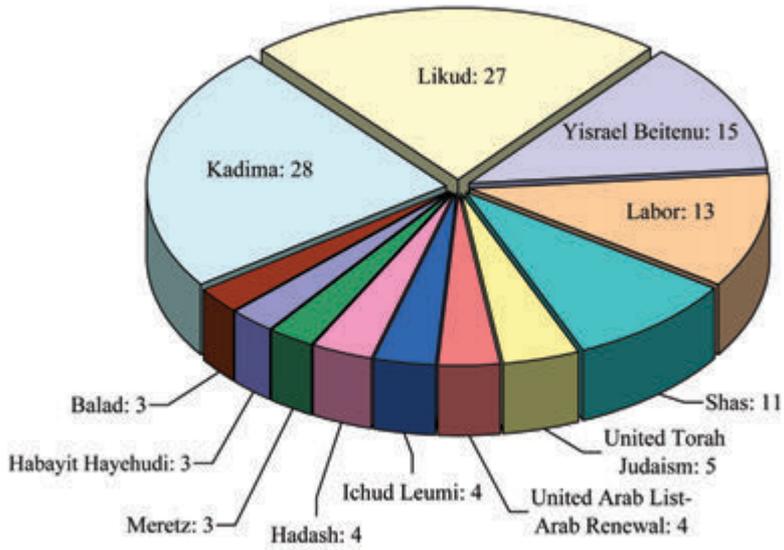
The opinion polls and the outcome of the elections revealed noticeable weakness among the religious Zionist parties and the election lists of the immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Religious Zionism was represented by Mafdal, but this party lost much of its appeal, which has previously impelled its leadership to cooperate during the 17th Knesset elections of 2006 with another religious Zionist party, National Union Party, and to form in 2009 another partisan platform, under the name of the Jewish Home, in preparation for the 18th Knesset elections. Similarly was the case with the parties of the Russian immigrants. Previously these immigrants voted for parties that strictly spoke on their behalf, like Yisrael Be'aliyah, but the significant social and political changes that they experienced, and their acclimatization to the Israeli way of life triggered them to rally behind the rapidly growing Yisrael Beiteinu, under the leadership of Avigdor Lieberman, which was open for all Israelis who accept the party's extreme rightist approach and orientation.

The Arab parties in Israel had on the whole maintained their strength. They were three in number: Firstly, Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (*Hadash*), secondly, United Arab List, which is composed of the Islamic Movement, the southern wing, Arab Movement for Renewal (*Ta-al*) and the Arab Democratic Party, and, thirdly, National Democratic Assembly (*Balad*).

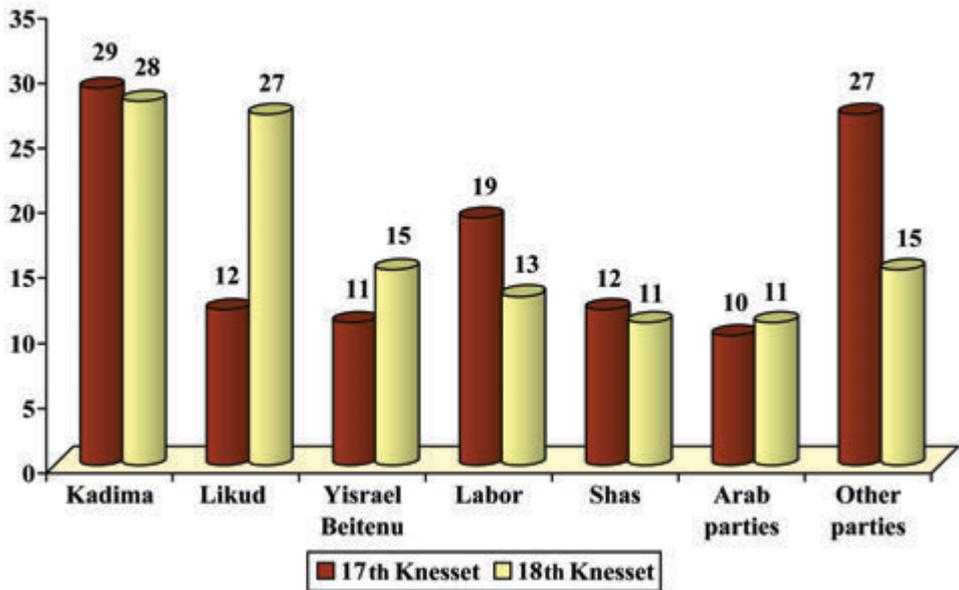
Table 1/2: Comparing the Outcome of the 18th Knesset Elections with That of the 17th Knesset Elections⁶

List name	17th Knesset 28/3/2006		18th Knesset 10/2/2009	
	No. of valid votes	No. of seat	No. of valid votes	No. of seat
Kadima	690,901	29	758,032	28
Likud	281,996	12	729,054	27
Yisrael Beiteinu	281,880	11	394,577	15
Labor	472,366	19	334,900	13
Shas	299,054	12	286,300	11
United Torah Judaism	147,091	6	147,954	5
United Arab List-Arab Renewal	94,786	4	113,954	4
Ichud Leumi	224,083	9	112,570	4
Mafdal			Form with other parties the Habayit Hayehudi Party	
Hadash	86,092	3	112,130	4
Meretz	118,302	5	99,611	3
Habayit Hayehudi (Mafdal and other parties)	-	-	96,765	3
National Democratic Assembly (Balad)	72,066	3	83,739	3
Pensioners Party (Gil)	185,759	7	17,571	-
Number of eligible voters	5,014,622		5,278,985	
Total votes	3,186,739		3,416,587	
Valid votes	3,137,064		3,373,490	

The Outcome of the 18th Knesset Elections



Comparing the Outcome of the 18th Knesset Elections with That of the 17th Knesset Elections



2. Election Results Analysis

The 2009 Knesset elections had glaringly demonstrated the weakness of the major parties and the decline of all kinds of ideological commitment, which, subsequently, had its impact on the governing coalition. The complexity and heterogeneity of the Israeli society had its repercussions on the character and form of the successive Israeli governments. However, all coalition governments had usually revolved around one or two major parties, though this tendency has progressively lost momentum, which, in turn, had repercussions on the governing coalitions.

The rest of the parties represent specific social sectors: three religious ones, National Union Party of the settlers, three Arab parties and the progressively declining leftist Meretz Party.

Thus, the 18th Knesset elections reflected the weakness and the decline of the leftist parties, particularly the Labor Party, and the noticeable rise of the rightist parties. Moreover, the party, whose head is usually assigned to form a coalition government, was not as dominant and prevailing as was the case during the first three decades since the foundation of Israel. Now, it needs to form a coalition of a large number of parties, which in turn will blackmail politically and financially.⁷

As expected, Kadima won 28 seats, Likud 27, Yisrael Beiteinu 15, Labor 13, Shas 11, United Torah Judaism 5, Jewish Home 3, National Union 4, Democratic Front for Peace and Equality 4, National Democratic Assembly 3, New Movement-Meretz 3.

Tzipi Livni, the leader of Kadima, expected to be asked by the Israeli President Shimon Peres to form the new government. But the rightist parties refused her premiership and rallied behind Benjamin Netanyahu, the leader of the Likud, who had thus gained the required parliamentary majority to form the government. These parties included the secular-oriented Yisrael Beiteinu and the religious-oriented Shas.

Voting among the Arabs

In the 18th Knesset elections, 53% of the total Arab voters participated, and the Arab lists got 310,263 of these votes. The United Arab List of the traditional and Islamic forces got 113,954 votes, the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality

(a socialist party) got 112,130 votes and the National Democratic Assembly (a nationalist party) (see table 1/2). Interestingly, the Democratic Front, which strongly advocated cooperation between Jews and Arabs, was supported by as much as 16,000 Jewish voters—the highest number it has ever had. The voters for the socialist party have slightly increased. Whereas, National Democratic Assembly voters have slightly decreased, perhaps due to the absence of its founder ‘Azmi Bishara’s.⁸

The pattern of the voting of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel in these elections reflects their bitter frustration and increasing grudge against the Israeli parties, who used to get thousands of their votes in the past. This reveals their profound protest against the policies of the successive Israeli governments, particularly after the war on GS.⁹ Though official reports admit that extensive discrimination has been exercised against these unfortunate people, none of the Israeli governments tried to lift this bias and oppression, and the citizenship status of the Arabs in Israel remained far behind that of the Israeli Jews.

The observations on the participation of the 1948 Palestinians in these elections may be summarized in the following points:

- The sharp and accelerating decline in Arab voting during the last three electoral rounds: 62% in 2003, 56% in 2006 and 53% in 2009. This was due, partially at least, to the feeling of hopelessness within the Palestinians circles of the possibility of a meaningful change in the Israeli political system, and to the campaign of boycott of the elections organized by the Islamic Movement under the leadership of Sheikh Ra’id Salah.
- Emphasis on the national inclination of the Arab voting, for as much as 85% of their votes were given to non-Israeli parties. This development has, in fact, strengthened the tendency towards electoral polarization between the Jews and the Arabs that appeared as early as the 1970s, and which reflected the growing adherence to the political identity. Moreover, it showed the profound disappointment and the distancing of the Palestinian Arabs from the Israeli state that is based on racial discrimination and favoritism to the Jews.
- The overwhelming majority of Arab voting to Israeli parties came from the Druze, who were represented by three Members of Knesset (MK), one in each of the following parties: the Likud, Kadima and Yisrael Beiteinu. Besides, another Druze MK, Said Naffaa, belonged to the National Democratic Assembly.



- Though the internal electioneering of the Palestinian Arabs has become less important within the prevailing polarization, an important observation worth recording, namely geographical bias. While the traditional party of the United Arab List is popular in rural and Bedouin areas, i.e., basically in Triangle area and Negev. The other two trends were favored in the Christian towns and in the areas that usually vote for the communists and socialists (Democratic Front), and amongst the middle class and the elite (Assembly), basically in Galilee.¹⁰

3. The Ruling Coalition: Alliance of Political Adversaries

Once asked to form a new government, Netanyahu approached the leaders of the political parties hoping to have a stable government of a broad coalition. The only communality between the parties of the new coalition was Zionist principles and the so-called right of the Jews in the “land of Israel,” but they had to forgo some of their demands for the sake of the formation of this 32 minister cabinet. Hence, there are many differences in orientation between the ministers of this government, particularly on some religious and global issues.

Having failed to secure an absolute majority for his party in the Knesset election, Netanyahu faced considerable pressure during his negotiations and drive to form the new government. Hence, he was obliged to allocate many ministerial posts to the coalition parties other than his party, which triggered many voices of opposition within his own party. Nonetheless, he managed to sternly impose his will.

The weakness of the major ruling party, the Likud, and the numerous coalition parties may initially give the impression of a fairly stable ruling coalition, but, in fact, it is liable to collapse once a major partner withdraw from it. Hence, throughout the second half of 2009 Netanyahu persistently tried to persuade Kadima to join his coalition government, and, on failing, he strove to disintegrate the party by attempting to incite some of its members to join the Likud. If only five of Kadima MKs switched to the Likud, Netanyahu will continue in power even if any party withdraws from the coalition government. Thus, it will lessen the government tendency to the extreme right.¹¹ But we have to caution that Netanyahu himself is an extremist and a manipulator, and that “moderate” policies might provoke troubles for him within his own party, the Likud.

Netanyahu's cabinet is indeed oversized, in terms of ministers and their deputies, which is another indicator of the weakness of the government. Historically, so long as a ruling Israeli party had a comfortable majority in the Knesset, and had the majority in the coalition government, the cabinet will be small in size. While Yitzhak Rabin's cabinet of 1992–1995 was composed of 17 ministers that of Netanyahu included 30 ministers, in addition to a good number of deputy ministers. Netanyahu's government suffers from two basic weaknesses that are both related to its ministerial size. First, the premier was compelled to sharply increase the ministerial posts and to allocate many of them to the coalition parties at the expense of his own party. Secondly, due to the oversized government, one third of the MKs occupy ministerial posts. This development obstructs the legislative function of the Knesset and over burdens the MKs as they have also to sit in parliamentary committees. Netanyahu's government is supported by 69 MKs in comparison to 45 in the opposition camp, while 5 members of the Labor Party deliberately absented themselves in protest of their party's affiliation to a ruling coalition that includes some ultra-right parties.¹²

The following are some selected broad points of the "Policy guidelines of 32nd Government of Israel":¹³

The Government will actively seek to fortify the national security and bestow personal security on its citizens while vigorously and determinedly fighting against violence and terror.

The Government will advance the political process and act to promote peace with all our neighbors, while preserving the security, historic and national interests of Israel.

The Government will advance a program to deal with the economic crisis and act to create economic conditions that will allow for sustainable growth, as well as create and maintain jobs in the economy.

The Government will strive for social justice by reducing social gaps and uncompromisingly fight against poverty through education, employment and an increase in assistance to the weaker segments of the population. (...)

The Government will preserve the Jewish character of the State and the legacy of Israel, as well as honor the religions and traditions of members of other religions in the country in accordance with the values of the Declaration of Independence.

In his address to the Knesset, Netanyahu undertook to resume peace negotiations with the PA on the issues of economy, security and stability, but he ignored mentioning the Palestinian state lest he provokes the opposition of Yisrael

Beiteinu and Shas that adamantly refuse its existence side by side with the state of Israel.¹⁴ With this background in mind, Netanyahu conditioned the resumption of negotiations on the Palestinian recognition of the Jewishness of Israel, though he later tactically retreated to claim that this is a condition for concluding a final agreement that ends the conflict once and for all. However, the Palestinian state that the ultra-right Netanyahu may, if at all, entertain would be in name only, effectively nothing more than an extended Palestinian self-rule. Such a scenario will expose the 1948 Palestinians to further persecution or transfer, or, alternatively, they may be affiliated to the Palestinian entity while residing in their present homes in return for the continuation of the Jewish settlements in the WB.¹⁵

Opinion polls, conducted immediately after Netanyahu's government received the Knesset's vote of confidence, revealed that large sectors of the Israeli society did not accept its big size, and, in particular, doubted its ability to confront the socio-economic challenges.¹⁶ Another opinion poll opined that Netanyahu was as bad as Olmert, and 57% supported the two-state solution.¹⁷ Nonetheless, his subsequent address at Bar-Ilan University was instrumental in gaining support, temporarily at least, for his internal and external policies.¹⁸

4. The Continuous Disintegration of Parties

Both Kadima and the Labor parties had experienced conflicts and disintegration in the course of 2009. Livni, the leader of Kadima, who had not been called by the Israeli President to form the new government and rejected to join Netanyahu's coalition, was opposed by a number of Kadima's MKs, lead by the party's second man, Shaul Mofaz. They contested her leadership and asked for primary elections to choose a new leader for the party, but she strongly resisted this proposal on the assumption that it was importunate.¹⁹ Nonetheless, further splits appeared in Kadima, which triggered some analysts to expect the party's eventual disintegration. Similarly was the case with the Labor Party, where a group of its leaders, led by five MKs, contested the leadership of Ehud Barak, whom they accused of ignoring the values of the party and dragging it to a rightist government.²⁰ They threatened to form a new group, but subsequently budged. However, the most prominent among them, Ophir Pines-Paz, resigned in early 2010 from the Knesset in protest of Barak's policies, retreat from the party's principles, loss of many seats in the Knesset, and the decline of the party's popularity among broad sectors of the Israeli society.²¹

5. Corruption Charges Against Israeli Politicians

Faced by many charges of corruption and money laundering, Ehud Olmert submitted early in 2009 the resignation of his government, which led to early Knesset elections. Investigations of charges of administrative malpractices and bribery also continued against other ministers and politicians. For example, Avigdor Lieberman, the leader of Yisrael Beiteinu, was so involved in some criminal charges that Attorney General Menachem Mazuz, at the Israel Bar Association's annual Eilat conference, "criticized Avigdor Lieberman's appointment as foreign minister, saying the Yisrael Beiteinu chairman would never have been given this job in a 'properly run country.'"²² Israeli police's National Fraud Investigation Unit will submit their recommendations on filing an indictment. It is not known if Mazuz will recommend filing criminal charges against Lieberman, and in any case, such a development is likely to take time, experts said.²³

The cabinet member and the leader of the rightist ultra-Orthodox Shas Party, Eliyahu "Eli" Yishai, was strongly suspected for receiving bribes while in office occupying the portfolio of the minister of interior. His Knesset colleague, Shlomo Benizri, was imprisoned by an Israeli court for bribery, money laundering and violation of public trust.²⁴ Yishai organized a campaign to persuade the Israeli president to pardon Benizri, but to no avail.

An opinion poll revealed that as high as 82% of the respondents believed that their leaders are heavily involved in corruption, and that their country, Israel, is high in the list of corrupt states.²⁵ There were other cases of corruption, money laundering and violation of trust against Israeli leaders. Ehud Barak, for example, was accused of taking advantage of his positions as a former premier, minister of defense and chief of general staff to secure exemption from taxes following the transfer of ownership of his own companies to his daughters.²⁶ He also got free airfares to his wife, which exposed him to a reprimand from the government attorney general and to a smear media campaign. An Israeli court imprisoned the former Minister of Finance Abraham Hirschson for embezzling funds when Hirschson headed the National Workers Organization (NWO) labor union. The list is so long, including senior local and municipal officials, that The Movement for Quality Government in Israel intensified its campaign to educate the Israeli public of the dimensions of the problem, reveal all kinds and forms of corruption, and to file charges against politicians and officials involved in such malpractices.²⁷



6. Goldstone Report Unites the Israeli Political Parties

Goldstone Report provoked the anger of all Israeli parties, be them on the extreme right or left. Both the Israeli President Peres and Premier Netanyahu declared that it was unfair, and that Israel was dragged into the war on GS in defense of its citizens against the missiles launched by Hamas from Gaza. They, moreover, declared that the Israeli government strongly rejects the charges against the army and the former government. Israel, the America's pro-Israel lobby, the American administration and other concerned global political organizations tried to shelve this report and to block its deliberation in the United Nations. Netanyahu declared that he will never allow Ehud Barak, Olmert and Livni to be dragged to the Hague Tribunal to face the charges launched by this report against them, He, moreover, defended the trio by claiming that they were doing their national duty in defending Israel, its citizens and interests.²⁸ Netanyahu had even claimed that the report hinders efforts to promote the peace process as well as encouraging terror organizations around the world.²⁹ However the 574 page report, that was supported by ten thousand pages of information and 188 individual interviews,³⁰ concluded that there was solid evidence of Israel's violations of human rights during its war on GS, which may tantamount to crimes against humanity.³¹ However, under international pressure, Netanyahu proposed the formation of committees within the army institution to investigate some cases in which international laws were violated, but without committing his government to cooperation with international organs to investigate the reported malpractices during the war. Interestingly, all political parties had without exception rallied behind the total rejection of the report and all its contents. However, some analysts within and outside Israel had read the Israeli refusal of the report and its findings as a de facto admission of the crimes. Netanyahu's government declared that it will issue its own report that refutes all that came in Goldstone Report.³² The year 2010 witnessed heated debates on this report and its Israeli counterpart, and Israel is bound to demand that the international community accepts its view.

However, a good number of Israeli generals and politicians are exposed to the probability of arrest in some European countries, particularly Britain, as some legal institutions had already filed warrants of arrests and charges against them, particularly Barak and Livni and others.

7. The Political Positions of the 1948 Palestinians

The year 2009 was politically eventful for the Palestinians in Israel. Notably was their extreme anger against the war on Gaza, which they had particularly aired out by massively voting in the 18th Knesset elections for the Arab parties.

Many reports issued by Israeli human rights centers had indicated steady decline in the status of the 1948 Palestinians. This was particularly so after the formation of Netanyahu's extreme-right government, and the numerous declarations by ministers and politicians that threatened the Arabs and dismissed them as second class citizens, even demanding that some strict conditions be imposed upon them if they were, in their words, to be full citizens. Many racial laws were enacted in 2009, which restricted freedom of expression and political rights. Their primary objective was to deprive the 1948 Palestinians from their Arab linguistic and cultural identity and other rights. Some Israeli politicians had conditioned the right for Israeli citizenship on loyalty oath to the "Jewish" state or mandatory military or civil service, and the recognition of the Zionist version on the establishment of Israel. All this contradicts the fundamentals of democracy where rights are not associated with, or conditioned on, anything.³³

In May 2009, the government supported a draft law that prohibited the Palestinians in Israel from Commemorating *al-Nakbah* (1948 war), which stipulated imprisonment to those who violate its dictates. But the 1948 Palestinians strongly resisted this law because it denies them their natural, historical and emotional right to reflect on their peoples' catastrophe. Hence, the law was revised where imprisonment was replaced by suspension of government funds to any organization that celebrates this occasion. The Israeli Minister of Education, Gideon Sa'ar, prohibited the inclusion of *al-Nakbah* in the school curriculum of the Arab schools.³⁴ Again, this decree contradicts the basic human rights of an individual to reflect on a catastrophe that his land, country and people had suffered.³⁵

The 1948 Palestinians viewed the Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz's order to a change in roadside signs across Israel's highways so that the all names appearing on them in English and Arabic would be a direct transliteration of Hebrew, as a violation of the law that recognizes Arabic as one of the two official languages in Israel, and as yet another step to tarnish their national culture and to marginalize the Arabic language, hence ultimately changing some of the historically significant and culturally loaded Arabic names.³⁶



The main slogan of Avigdor Lieberman, the leader of Yisrael Beiteinu, in the 18th Knesset elections was a provision to associate Arab rights with their loyalty to Israel and its laws. MK David Rotem of the same party, submitted a Loyalty bill that stated that anyone seeking an Israeli citizenship would have to pledge their allegiance to the State of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people. Other sections of the amendment demanded the pledge be a prerequisite to getting an Israeli ID. It also determines that the interior minister would be allowed to annul the citizenship of a person who did not fulfill the duty of serving in the army or performing an alternative service.³⁷ But the bill was knocked down in the Ministerial Committee on Legislative Affairs, largely because of its total rejection by the Arabs and some liberal Jews.

The above draft law indicated an increasing racial discriminatory tendency in the Israeli street, which had by then reached up to the Israeli stronghold of democracy, the Knesset. Analysts and observers are inclined to maintain that this orientation will aggravate in 2010, where additional racist draft laws will be submitted to irritate the Palestinians, make life difficult for them and to deprive them from their basic citizenship rights as specified in “Declaration of Independence” that was signed by the founders of Israel on the establishment of the state on 14/5/1948.³⁸

A 2008 survey and an accompanied analysis by Prof. Sammy Smooha of Haifa University indicated that only 41.4% of the Palestinians in Israel recorded their recognition of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state compared to 65.6% in 2003. The survey showed that a profound change in the political stand of the Palestinian Arabs had occurred after the Second Lebanon War in 2006, and had further accelerated after the war on Gaza, namely they demanded a quick two-state solution. We should record here that the establishment of a Palestinian state side by side with Israel has become the demand of the majority of the Palestinians in Israel. For the establishment of such a state will provide a national home for the rest of the Palestinians, and thus solve their problem and improve their conditions.³⁹ As for the Palestinians in Israel themselves, they are not prepared to move to a Palestinian state established in the WB and GS because they adhere to their Palestinian lands and homes that have become under the Israeli control at a historical time in 1948. Thus, they view Israel as an organizational framework for their life, notwithstanding the constraints and difficulties that they suffer.

In a related vein, the Palestinians in Israel do not trust the Israeli system of justice, particularly after the publication of the Or Commission that investigated the role of the police in the October 2000 incidents in which 13 Palestinian Arabs in Israel were killed in cold blood by police fire. Nonetheless, the attorney general ordered the closure of the case against the policemen involved in this crime. Besides this grave injustice, there were the increasing extreme rightist tendencies of successive Israeli governments, and the frequent discriminatory statements by ministers against the Arab citizens in Israel. All these had strengthened Palestinian opposition against those and other racist discriminatory policies.⁴⁰ There were measures like appealing for legal and judicial aid from human right centers like The Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel (Adalah), or by indicating that they will file cases in international organizations to disclose the Israeli policies, as was the case with Durban Conference that was held in South Africa to confront racism, and in which some Palestinian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Israel were represented.

Meanwhile the Israeli had sharply and consistently decreased government funds extended to Arab towns and villages in Israel, and actively pursued the destruction of the houses there under the pretext of lack of building licenses. Apparently, this drive was parallel with what Netanyahu's government was doing in Jerusalem and other towns in the WB, where houses were also demolished under the very same excuse. It has become evident that the Israeli government was persistently pursuing its plans to displace the Palestinians in Israel and in the WB as part of its grand scheme to seize more Arab lands for its settlement project. Though the Follow-up Committee for Arab Citizens in Israel had issued a series of statements and took many stances and measures against these policies,⁴¹ the drive of destruction of Arab houses will apparently increase in the following years, and bloody clashes between the 1948 Palestinians and the Israeli police will most likely take place. Another reason for this likelihood is the continuation of Israeli policy of Judaization of Jerusalem and other holy sites, especially in East Jerusalem. It is worth noting here that the Islamic Movement in Israel plays a major role in rallying and alerting Palestinian public opinion to the Israeli plans in East Jerusalem, fundamentally with regard to the holy sites, especially *al-Aqsa* Mosque.



All in all, the Arab political forces in Israel developed a unified political stand against the policies of the Israeli ultra-right governments, particularly those that conditioned their surrender of Arab rights on performing some specified obligations. The Palestinians in Israel were also unified in their condemnation of the Israeli aggression on GS, and in their urgent demands for reconciliation between the Palestinians factions, stoppage of shedding the blood of the brothers, and to direct all their energy against the Israeli occupation. Due to these and other positions, the Palestinians in Israel are expected to face further restrictions, hardship and arrest under the assumption that they constitute an immediate and grave danger to Israel. Thus, under the guise of security to its territories, people and national project, Israel would forcefully try to seize the rest of the Palestinian lands and properties.

Second: The Most Prominent Population, Economic and Security Indicators

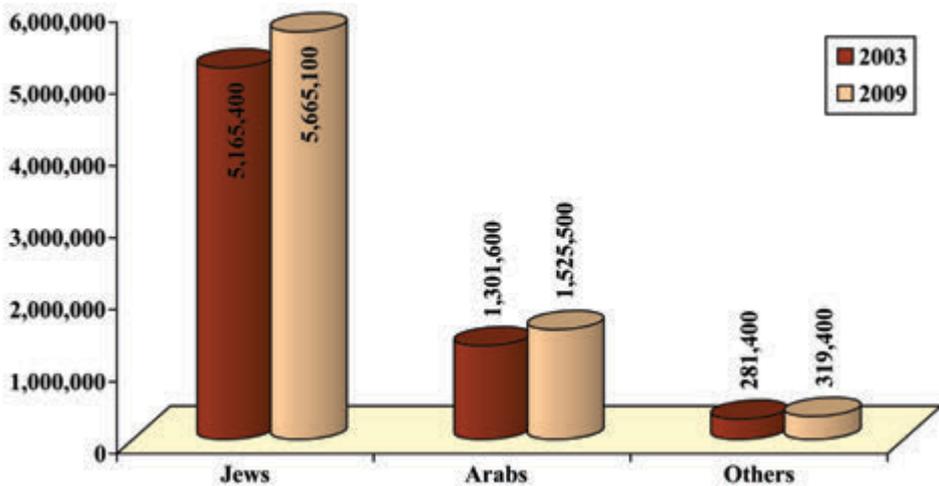
1. The Population Indicators

The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) estimated the total population of Israel by the end of 2009 to be about 7.51 millions, of whom 5.67, i.e., 75.4%, are Jews. While about 319 thousands, i.e., 4.3%, are tabled by the CBS as “others,” those are mostly immigrants from Russia, countries of the former Soviet Union and East Europe, whose Judaism is not recognized, or non-Arab Christians. As for the Arab population, including those in East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, they were about 1.53 millions, i.e., 20.3% of the total population (see table 2/2). If we subtract the population of the latter, about 271 thousands, then the 1948 Palestinians are about 1.25 million, about 17% of Israel’s total population.⁴² The data from an internal Israeli Civil Administration report list about 313 thousand settlers in the WB,⁴³ except those in East Jerusalem. According to The Applied Research Institute—Jerusalem (ARIJ), the number of Jewish settlers in the WB totaled 580 thousands, of whom 236 thousands reside in East Jerusalem and 344 thousands in the rest of the WB.

Table 2/2: Population of Israel 2003–2009
(Population estimates do not include foreign labor)⁴⁴

Year	Total population number	Jews	Arabs (including the population of East Jerusalem and in the Golan Heights)	Others
2003	6,748,400	5,165,400	1,301,600	281,400
2004	6,869,500	5,237,600	1,340,200	291,700
2005	6,990,700	5,313,800	1,377,100	299,800
2006	7,116,700	5,393,400	1,413,300	310,000
2007	7,243,600	5,478,200	1,450,000	315,400
2008	7,374,000	5,569,200	1,487,600	317,200
2009	7,510,000	5,665,100	1,525,500	319,400

Population of Israel in 2003 and 2009



In 2009, the average rate of population growth in Israel was 1.8%, the same rate since 2003. The Israeli population growth is 90% natural, as during the year 2009 a sum of 160 thousand persons were born while 39 thousands died.⁴⁵ However, the rate of population growth in the Jewish settlements of the WB is higher than that in Israel, i.e., 3.8%, which is primarily attributed to the religiosity of the settlers.⁴⁶

According to the CBS, 14,569 immigrants came to Israel in the year 2009, compared to 13,699 in the preceding year (see table 3/2). However, this figure is not in line with that of the Jewish Agency for Israel, which estimated the number

of immigrants in 2009 as 16,200.⁴⁷ This discrepancy might be attributed to the possibility that one source records the actual immigrants while another gives the probable ones, and a third includes the tourists who had later changed their minds and opted for migration from Israel. However, the figure for 2009 confirms the tendency of a general decline in immigrations to Israel since 2000, as most of the sources for this immigration had already been exhausted, and most of the Diaspora Jews reside in advanced countries, the USA and Europe, where there are no compelling reasons for them to immigrate to Israel in big numbers. Interestingly, the decline in immigration to Israel coincides with a rise in counter immigration from the country, by an annual average of about ten thousands immigrants.⁴⁸ This had also coincided with stagnation in the numbers of Jews worldwide, except in Israel, which is not attributed to immigration as may be assumed, but is an outcome of the decline in natural growth and desertion of Judaism.⁴⁹

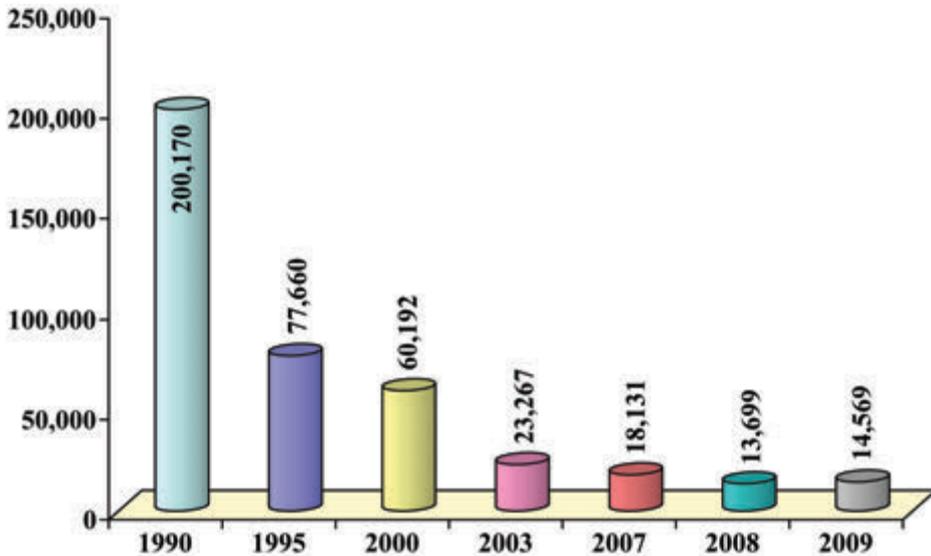
According to Natan Sharansky, Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, about half of the 2009 immigrants to Israel came from the former republics of the Soviet Union and East Europe, while the rest were from North America, Europe and South America. These statistics record that 88 Jewish immigrants to Israel came, via other countries, from Arab countries: Morocco, Yemen, Tunisia and Lebanon. Correspondingly, Jewish emigration from Ethiopia to Israel had significantly decreased from 1,582 immigrants in 2008 to less than 300 during 2009.⁵⁰

Table 3/2: Number of Jewish Immigrants to Israel 1990–2009⁵¹

Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
No. of immigrants	200,170	176,650	77,350	77,860	80,810	77,660	70,919	66,221	56,727	76,766	60,192

Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
No. of immigrants	43,580	33,565	23,267	20,898	21,168	19,267	18,131	13,699	14,569	1,229,469

Number of Jewish Immigrants to Israel (Selected Years)



In a statement to the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth*, Professor Sergio Della Pergola, an expert on Jewish demographics and the head of the Shlomo Argov chair of Israel-Diaspora Relations at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, said that “there are currently 13.3 million Jews living in 100 countries all over the world, 41% of which have made Israel their home.” However, Pergola warned against what “can lead to the sacrificing of many Jewish characteristics and eventually its basic value system” due to an increased tendency for interfaith marriage, whose rate reached to 75% in the states of the former Soviet Union. “In the US [United States of America] the figure is close to 55%, in France and England over 40%, in Canada 35%, in Australia 25%, and in Mexico 10%.”⁵²

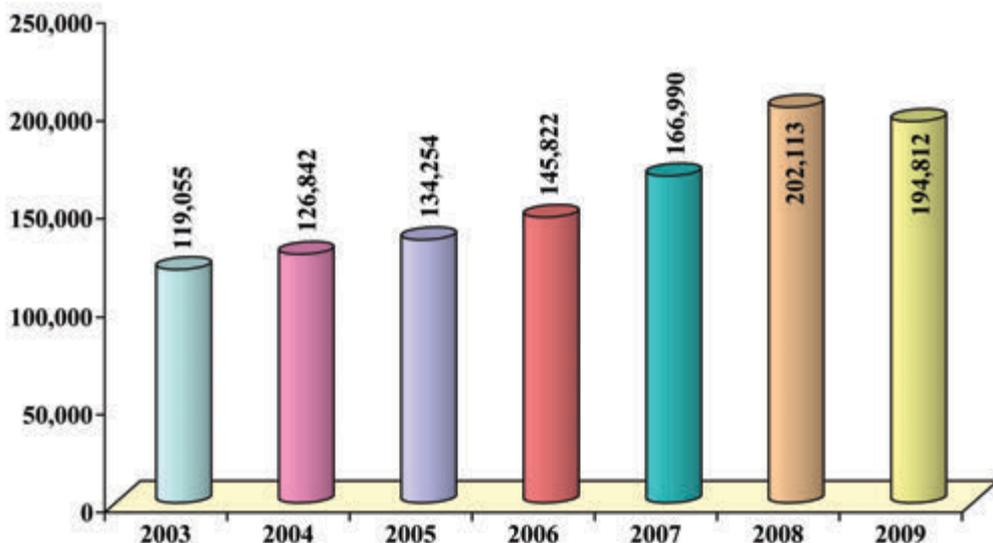
2. The Economic Indicators

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the year 2009 totaled about 766.12 billion Shekels, compared to 725.14 billion shekels in 2008, i.e., an increase of 5.7%. But counting this growth in dollars shows that it had actually decreased by approximately 3.6% (from \$202.11 billion in 2008 to \$194.81 billion in 2009). This is due to the rise in the rate of exchange of the dollar versus the Shekel, which, according to official updated statistics, rose from 3.5878 Shekels per Dollar as the average for 2008 to 3.9326 Shekels per Dollar as the average for 2009.

Table 4/2: Israeli Gross Domestic Product 2003–2009⁵³

Year	GDP (million shekels)	GDP (\$ million)	Shekel exchange rate (according to Bank of Israel)
2003	541,500	119,055	4.5483
2004	568,505	126,842	4.482
2005	602,504	134,254	4.4878
2006	649,854	145,822	4.4565
2007	686,011	166,990	4.1081
2008	725,142	202,113	3.5878
2009	766,118	194,812	3.9326

Israeli Gross Domestic Product 2003–2009 (\$ million)

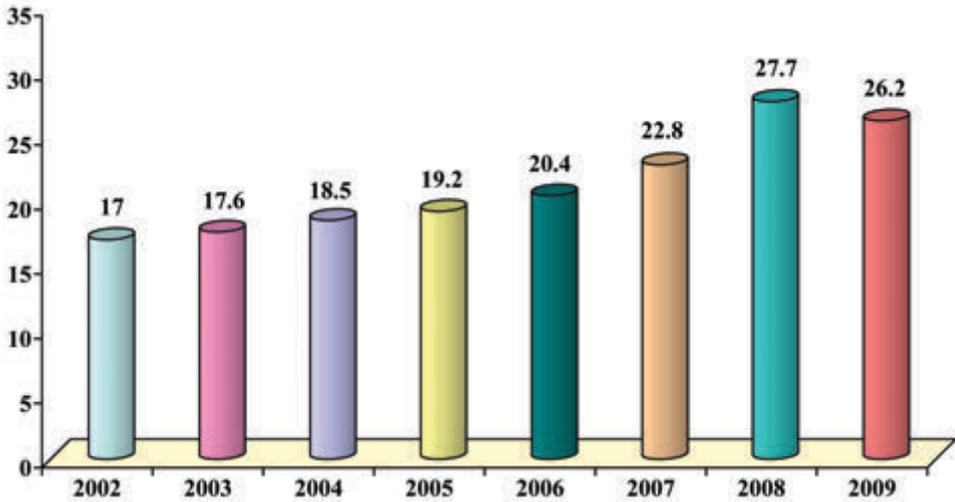


According to the official statistics, the per capita income in Israel increased from 99,215 to 102,969 Shekels, respectively in 2008 and 2009. But in terms of dollars, it had actually decreased, from \$27,653 in 2008 to \$26,183 in 2009, because of the above appreciation in the rate of exchange of the dollar versus the Shekel.

Table 5/2: Israeli GDP per Capita 2002–2009
at Current Prices (\$ thousand)⁵⁴

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
GDP per capita	17	17.6	18.5	19.2	20.4	22.8	27.7	26.2

Israeli GDP per Capita 2002–2009 (\$ thousand)



The overall budget for 2009 totaled about 316.5 billion Shekels, with a deficit of 6%, while that of 2010 approximately reached 321.5 billion Shekels, with a deficit of 5.5%.⁵⁵

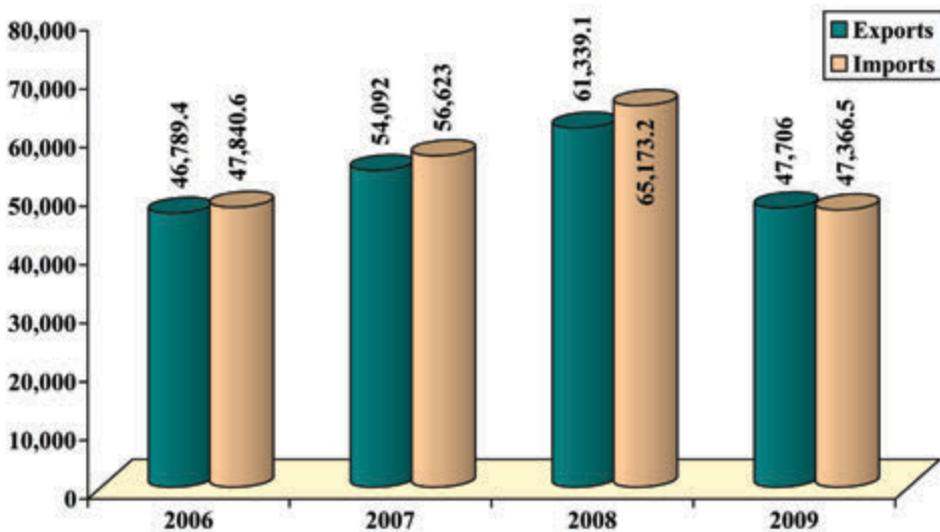
The Israeli exports for 2009 totaled \$47.71 billion, compared to \$61.34 billion in 2008, i.e., a decrease of 22%. As for the imports, they also decreased from \$65.17 billion in 2008 to \$47.34 billion in 2009, i.e., a shrink of 27% in 2009 (see table 6/2). The impact of the global economic crisis on the international markets was largely responsible for this significant drop in both the Israeli exports and imports for the year 2009. This is particularly so with Israel's major trading partner, the USA, where the overall size of both the Israeli exports and imports to America decreased in 2009 by 16% and 27% respectively.

Table 6/2: Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2006–2009 (\$ million)⁵⁶

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009
Exports	46,789.4	54,092	61,339.1	47,706
Imports	47,840.6	56,623	65,173.2	47,366.5



Total Israeli Exports and Imports 2006–2009 (\$ million)



The USA continues to be Israel's first trade partner. In 2009, the exports of Israel to the USA totaled \$16.72 billion, about 35% of the overall Israeli exports, while its imports from the USA for the same year reached \$5.85 billion, approximately 12.3% of the totality of the imports. Israel compensates its trade deficit with most of its trading partners with the trade surplus with the USA, which amounts to about \$11 billion. Indeed, this is a gigantic support to the Israeli economy (see table 7/2).

Belgium is still Israel's second best trade partner, largely because of trade in diamonds and other precious minerals. Israel exports and imports to and from this country in 2009 respectively totaled \$2.36 and \$2.57 billion. Next comes Germany where Israeli exports to it was \$1.44 billion, and imports from it reached \$3.36 billion. China and Switzerland were the fourth and fifth trade partners, respectively. However, Hong Kong retreated in 2009 to the sixth rank of Israeli trade partners, where Israeli exports to and imports from it respectively totaled \$2.87 billion and \$1.11 billion. The rise of Israeli exports to Hong Kong seems to be because it constituted a center for re-exporting Israeli goods to different parts of the world. However, the Israeli official statistics that records Hong Kong as the destination of Israeli goods does not mean that they always go there to be re-exported later, but some of them go to Cyprus or other transit points from which they are re-exported to the region, including Arab countries.

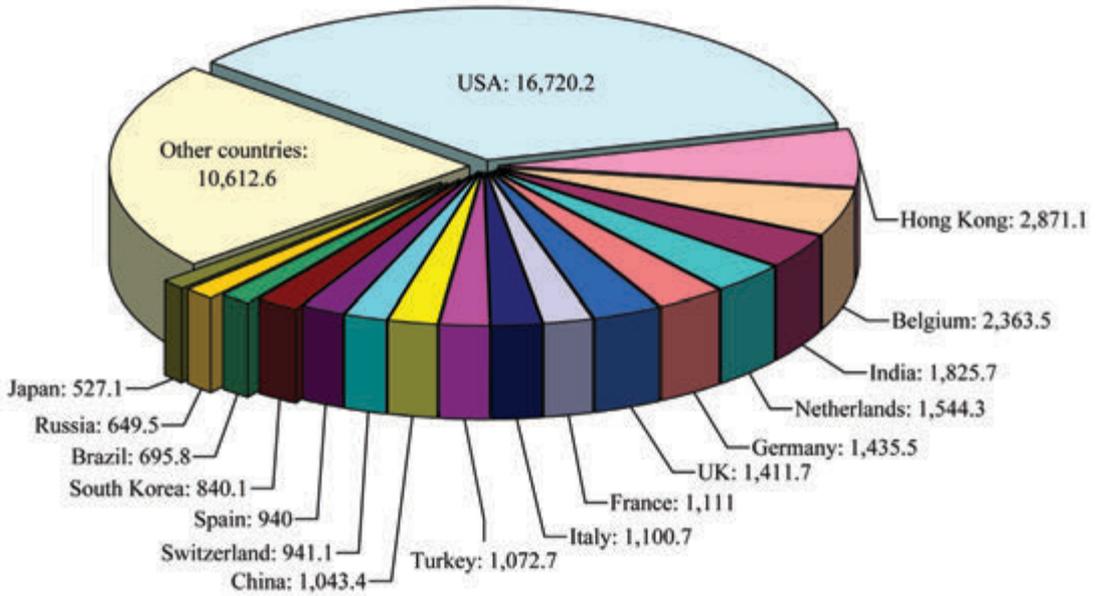
Besides the USA, Belgium, Germany and Hong Kong, and during 2009, there were other prominent destinations for Israeli exports: India (\$1.83 billion), then Netherlands (\$1.54 billion), followed by the United Kingdom (UK), France, Italy and Turkey. The noticeable rise in Israeli exports to India appears to be associated with trade in armament. As for the most prominent countries from which Israel imported some of its needs, they are: China (\$3.52 billion), Switzerland (\$3.29 billion), Italy (\$2.13 billion), followed by UK, Netherlands, Japan and then France (see table 7/2).

Table 7/2: Israeli Exports and Imports with Selected Countries

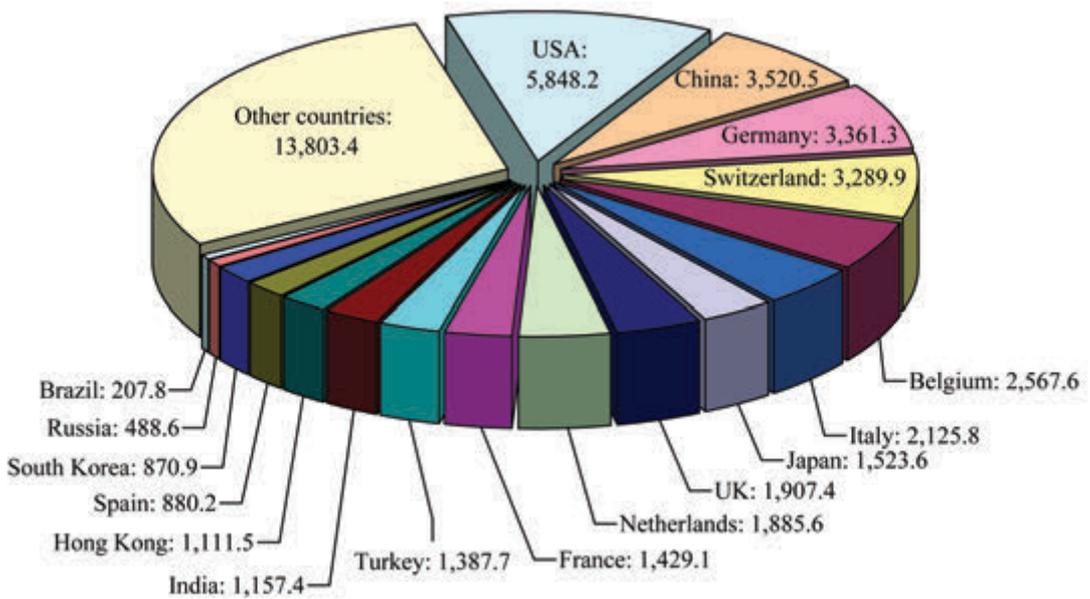
2006–2009 (\$ million)⁵⁷

Countries	Israeli exports to:				Israeli imports from:			
	2009	2008	2007	2006	2009	2008	2007	2006
USA	16,720.2	19,972.5	18,906.8	17,957.2	5,848.2	8,034.4	7,848.9	5,919.5
Hong Kong	2,871.1	4,140.8	3,118.4	2,776.1	1,111.5	1,813.7	1,747.5	1,527.5
Belgium	2,363.5	4,618.7	4,070.8	3,068.4	2,567.6	4,250.3	4,454.9	3,936.9
India	1,825.7	2,361.3	1,613.7	1,289.4	1,157.4	1,648.8	1,689.6	1,433.7
Netherlands	1,544.3	2,035	1,609.3	1,312.2	1,885.6	2,465.3	2,090.3	1,786.8
Germany	1,435.5	1,950.6	1,913	1,757.9	3,361.3	3,940.5	3,484.3	3,201.4
UK	1,411.7	1,892.7	1,938.1	1,601.7	1,907.4	2,519.9	2,681.4	2,458.6
France	1,111	1,298	1,313.2	1,092.2	1,429.1	1,889.2	1,480.9	1,301.5
Italy	1,100.7	1,668.8	1,284.4	1,072.7	2,125.8	2,553.7	2,302.1	1,839.4
Turkey	1,072.7	1,609.9	1,195.8	821.2	1,387.7	1,825.3	1,606.9	1,272.7
China	1,043.4	1,293.5	1,040.6	958.8	3,520.5	4,244	3,476.9	2,427.7
Switzerland	941.1	1,210.4	1,036.1	809	3,289.9	3,973.6	2,882.3	2,805.9
Spain	940	1,108	1,106	903	880.2	959.1	811.9	749
South Korea	840.1	818.5	746.1	650	870.9	1,103.2	945.4	893.6
Brazil	695.8	1,172	671.6	465.7	207.8	297.2	270.7	209.4
Russia	649.5	777	611.5	524.6	488.6	1,047.1	1,398.8	1,141.6
Japan	527.1	883	769.6	792.8	1,523.6	2,226.7	1,882.1	1,292.3
Other countries	10,612.6	12,528.4	11,147	8,936.5	13,803.4	20,381.2	15,568.1	13,643.1
Total	47,706	61,339.1	54,092	46,789.4	47,366.5	65,173.2	56,623	47,840.6

Israeli Exports to Selected Countries 2009 (\$ million)



Israeli Imports from Selected Countries 2009 (\$ million)



In the face of global crisis, and according to a report by the International Monetary Fund (IMF):

Israeli output growth was amongst the last to fall below trend, among the mildest hit, and one of the earliest to stage a recovery. Output is projected to have been no worse than flat overall in 2009, and was up in both Q2 and Q3 2009 began to restore a measure of confidence since the beginning of the second quarter of the year 2009... The economy was shielded from the global downturn by the absence of prior housing or bank credit booms, high household savings rates, and the fact that investment goods and consumer durables—demand for which contracted sharply—are mostly imported from abroad. But the strength of output also owes much to the public debt reduction and structural reforms of the past decade, as well as the specific policy responses to the crisis... While output, consumption, and confidence are close to their Fall 2008 levels, exports, imports, and fixed investment are far from fully recovered. Unemployment has edged up to some 8%, the stock of bank credit to corporates has fallen through much of the year, and inflation has been above target for much of that time...

As for the forecast for the year 2010, the projected GDP is expected to grow by 2.5%.⁵⁸

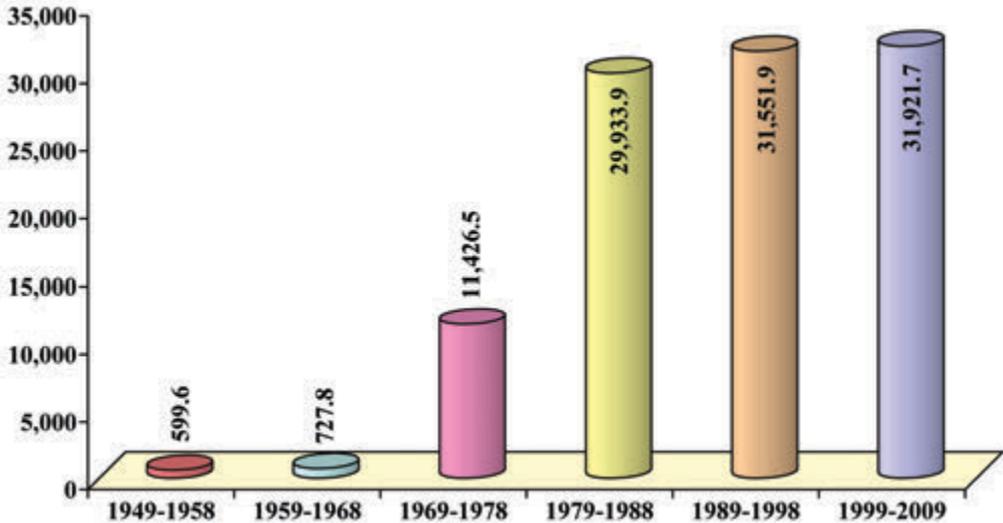
Though Israel is considered a rich and developed country, it still receives a US foreign annual assistance. The military assistance that it received in 2009 amounted to \$2.55 billion, compared to \$2.38 billion in 2008. Hence, the aid that America extended to Israel during the period 1949–2009 reached, according to the report of Congressional Research Service (CRS), \$106.16 billion (see table 8/2).

Table 8/2: American Aid to Israel 1949–2009 (\$ million)⁵⁹

Period	Total
1949–1958	599.6
1959–1968	727.8
1969–1978	11,426.5
1979–1988	29,933.9
1989–1998	31,551.9
1999–2009	31,921.7



American Aid to Israel 1949–2009 (\$ million)



Israel got an American aid of \$1.22 billion during the period 1949–1967, which jumped to \$11.53 billion during the period 1968–1978. Since the conclusion of Camp David Accords with Egypt in 1979 and until Oslo Accords of 1993, the American aid to Israel totaled \$45.93 billion, which increased to \$47.48 billion during the duration 1994-2009.⁶⁰

However, with the significant improvement of the Israeli economy in the mid 1990s, the American financial aid to Israel has become less convincing to many sectors of the American society and to the world at large. Hence, in 1998 the American administration concluded a deal with the Hebrew state to gradually reduce over a period of ten years its economic aid, which had by then totaled \$1.2 billion, i.e., starting the year 2000 and by an annual rate of \$120 million. Correspondingly, America will annually increase during the same period its military aid to Israel by \$60 million, so that the total military aid will gradually grow over this decade from \$1.8 billion to \$2.4 billion. Moreover, in:

August 2007, the Bush Administration announced that it would increase US military assistance to Israel by \$6 billion over the next decade. The agreement calls for incremental \$150 million annual increases in [Foreign Military Financing] FMF to Israel, starting at \$2.55 billion in [Fiscal Year] FY2009 and reaching \$3.15 billion by 2013 through 2018.⁶¹

3. The Military Indicators

By 2009 the Israeli military institution was obviously considerably troubled by five “obsessions”: the totality of the Palestinian situation, Iran and its nuclear project, the security dimensions of the new American policy towards the Middle East, the armament of what Israel calls “radical groups in the region,” in an obvious reference to Hamas and Hizbullah, and, finally, stability in neighboring Arab states. The significant repercussions of the wars on GS and Lebanon, respectively late 2008 and in the summer of 2006, had impelled Israel to give utmost attention to the readiness and alertness of its military and security forces. Though the Israeli government had done its level best, through what it called “deterrence message” and “calm” along its frontiers with Lebanon and the GS, many observers opined that the Israel was unable during 2009 to decisively settle these issues in its favor. These worries continued during 2010 and no decisive action was taken too.

One of the most important military indicators that took place at the outset of 2009 was a memorandum of understanding that Israel signed on 16/1/2009 with the USA, which prohibited “supply of arms and related materiel and weapons transfers and shipments to Hamas and other terrorist organizations in Gaza.” The impact of this provision materialized on the ground by the end of the year, where international efforts were intensified to prohibit the smuggling of arms to GS, and the Egyptian regime built a steel wall across its frontiers with GS. One of the most important provisions of the above memo was that:

United States will work with regional and NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] partners to address the problem of the supply of arms and related materiel and weapons transfers and shipments to Hamas and other terrorist organizations in Gaza, including through the Mediterranean, Gulf of Aden, Red Sea and eastern Africa.

Moreover, among the tools that will be pursued is the “enhanced US security and intelligence cooperation with regional governments on actions to prevent weapons and explosives flows to Gaza that originate in or transit their territories; including through the involvement of relevant components of the US Government,” and that the “United States will accelerate its efforts to provide logistical and technical assistance and to train and equip regional security forces in counter-smuggling tactics, working towards augmenting its existing assistance programs.”⁶²



Within the international and Israeli efforts to prohibit smuggling of arms to GS, a French frigate, *Germinal* (F735), started immediately after the war on Gaza to supervise the coasts of the Strip. France's presidential office has announced that the French warship will conduct "surveillance in international waters off Gaza, in full cooperation with Egypt and Israel."⁶³ Quoting the American network CBS, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* published an article on 26/3/2009 to the effect that the Israeli Air Force carried out an attack, in January, against a convoy of trucks in Sudan carrying arms for Hamas in the GS. It added that 39 people riding in 17 trucks were killed, while civilians in the area suffered injuries.⁶⁴

The Israeli military institution had given great attention to Goldstone Report during the second half of 2009, and the report is still having an impact at the military and political levels in the country. It embodied evidence of serious violation of human rights and international law prior to and during the period 27/12/2008 to 18/1/2009. The report viewed the siege of GS as collective punishment, and pointed to violations of the human rights of the Palestinians in Israel and in the WB. The report has seriously damaged world wide the reputation of the Israeli army, that has been repeatedly exhibited by the Israeli authorities to be of high moral standard. Moreover, it encouraged the tracking of the accused Israeli politicians and army officers in the international court of justice and in the relevant courts in all parts of the world.

Meanwhile the Israeli military institutions continued during 2009 to actively implement the Tefen 2012 plan that was submitted in 2007 after the summer 2006 war on Lebanon. It concentrated on steps to be taken to strengthen the army and to improve the capabilities of training, ammunition reserves, arms purchase, combat means, and armament. The plan had particularly addressed the issues of human resources, land forces, and reserve forces.⁶⁵

Within the drive to derive lessons from the wars on Lebanon and GS, Israel conducted, during the period 31/5/2009-4/6/2009, the most extensive nationwide drill "Turning Point 3":

It is aimed at training the Israeli home front, from the government level down to the plain citizen level, and will simulate a comprehensive regional war. According to the scenario, the war will involve Hamas, Hizbullah and Syria. Palestinians will carry out terror attacks, and Israel's Arabs will riot in masses.⁶⁶

Within their plan to improve Israeli's missile capability to confront the presumed Iranian threat, the Israelis conducted with the USA, during the period 21/10/2009–3/11/2009, largest-ever joint military exercises ever held by the countries, Juniper Cobra. The aim was to jointly test four ballistic missile defense systems, in which the American destroyer USS Higgins (DDG-76) participated. The maneuvers were operated under the assumption of a comprehensive and heavy missile attack on Israel from Iran, Syria, Lebanon and GS in order to study the degree of preparedness in Israel, and coordination between the American and Israeli defense capabilities to repel such an attack.⁶⁷

In the same vein, the Israeli military reported that it had conducted a successful high-seas test of the Barak missile defense system, in July 2009 the experiment involved a simulated enemy missile targeted at a ship, with the Barak system intercepting the missile. A top-ranking Navy official said the Barak defense system hit and destroyed the enemy missile. The Barak is launched from an upright position, thus saving room on the deck of the ship and enabling it to hit targets in a 360 degree range around the ship. The same sources spoke of manufacturing a more sophisticated missile than the C802 radar-guided missile, which damaged an Israeli warship during the war of summer 2006 on Lebanon.⁶⁸

Moreover, according to Channel 10 of the Israeli television, Patriot missile unit of the Israeli air force had destroyed, within a secret operation conducted in July 2009 at Palmahim air force base of Rushon LeZion city, a mocked infiltration of an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) via the northern frontiers. A senior officer of the Israeli air force reported that this is related to the development of another system that constitutes an important addition to the air defense capability, as it complements the two systems, Iron Dome system and Arrow-2 Missile Interceptor System (Hetz). Some military sources described this successful experiment as encouraging and useful to the Israeli air defense system, which had been heavily demoralized after a long range missile intercept test utilizing the Improved Arrow-2 was aborted.⁶⁹ Additionally, the armaments development authority Rafael (Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd) indicated that the first complete short-range missile interception "Iron Dome" system is expected to become operational as early as summer 2010 to intercept al-Qassam and Grad rockets.⁷⁰ It is worth noting that the Israeli military establishment had more than once fixed a time for activating this system, but backed down and postponed it, because of its doubtful

effectiveness and high cost—a single missile costs many thousands compared to less than one thousand dollars per one Palestinian missile.⁷¹

In a related development some foreign media sources disclosed that Israel carried out a major military exercise over the eastern Mediterranean and over Greece during the first week of June 2009, in which more than one hundred F-16 and F-15 planes participated. The exercise also included Israeli helicopters that could be used to rescue downed pilots. The helicopters and refueling tankers flew more than 900 miles (about 1.448 kilometers), which is about the same distance between Israel and Iran's uranium enrichment plant at Natanz.⁷² These maneuvers provoked the concern of some circles on the role of the Israeli air force in the eastern Mediterranean, and whether this is related to a probable military strike against Iran.

In October 2009, Israeli top military leadership expressed their fury over Turkey's decision to cancel an annual multinational air force drill (annual Anatolia Eagle drill) that would have included the US and NATO because it opposed Israeli participation, and demanded that their government take punitive action against Turkey. But the Israeli government was not willing to aggravate tension with Ankara, and was satisfied by the American decision to totally withdraw NATO's participation in the drill.⁷³

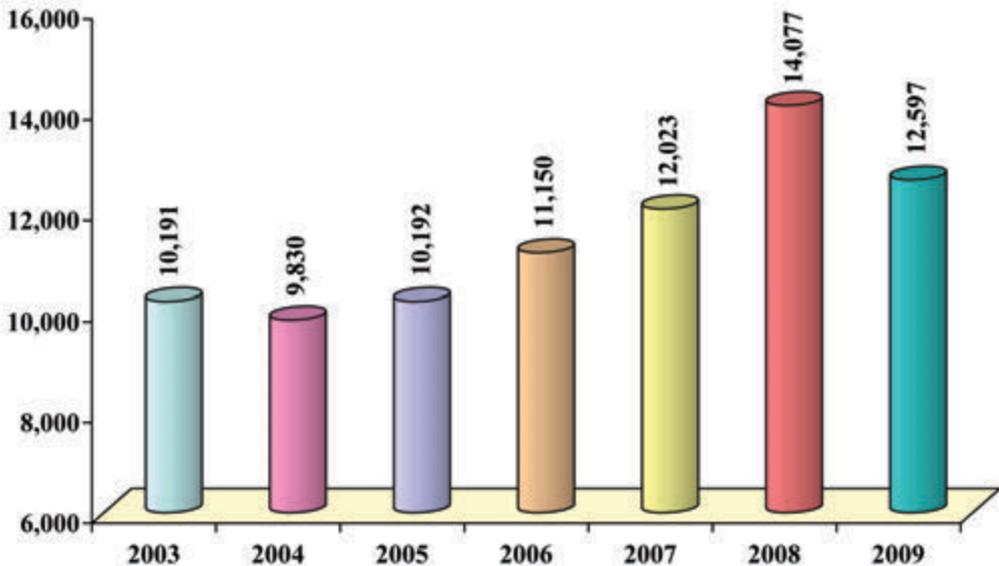
In November 2009, some Israeli fighters participated with the Italian air force in a major maneuver over the Mediterranean Sea that was launched from an Italian base in Sardinia island. According to the Israeli newspaper *Maariv*, Israel participated with five F-15 and five F-16 planes that are allocated for long range strategic bombardment. Israel's joint maneuvers with the European air forces give it the opportunity to test its fighting theories, the suitability of its machinery for coordination with foreign armaments and the safety of its fighters. Some military sources reported the growing inclination of the Israeli army to be trained and to coordinate with foreign armies.⁷⁴

The Israeli military consumption in 2009 totaled 49.54 billion shekels (\$12.6 billion),⁷⁵ while the estimated one for 2010 totaled 53.2 billion Shekels (\$14.2 billion).⁷⁶ As demonstrated in tables 4/2 and 9/2, the military budget (in Shekels) for 2003 constituted 8.6% of the domestic product, while that for 2009 was 6.5%. The overall outcome from all this is that the military burden on the financial resources is decreasing, though the military budget is increasing. The same outcome applies when calculating the budget in dollars.

Table 9/2: Israeli Military Consumption 2003-2009⁷⁷

Year	Military consumption (million shekels)	Military consumption at current prices (\$ million)	GDP* (million shekels)	Percentage of military consumption compared to GDP (shekels)
2003	46,351	10,191	541,500	8.6%
2004	44,060	9,830	568,505	7.8%
2005	45,739	10,192	602,504	7.6%
2006	49,690	11,150	649,854	7.6%
2007	49,393	12,023	686,011	7.2%
2008	50,504	14,077	725,142	7%
2009	49,539	12,597	766,118	6.5%

* Review table 4/2.

Israeli Military Consumption 2003-2009 (\$ million)

Notwithstanding its central position in the state and the society, the Israeli army suffers the problem of recruiting suitable fighters.⁷⁸ *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper claimed that 1,900 eligible recruits for military services in 2009 failed to report to the recruitment offices, thus they are considered evaders. Moreover, the rate of recruitment of the Palestinian Druze had also retracted during the last years by 50%.⁷⁹



Third: Aggression and Resistance

Israel continued its aggression on the Palestinian people throughout 2009. The first month of the year witnessed a total Israeli war on GS, in which hundreds were killed or wounded, in addition to the huge destruction of houses and infrastructure. However, after the war both Israel and Hamas observed an undeclared truce that continued until the end of the year. This was reflected in the stoppage of firing Palestinian missiles and bombs towards the surrounding Israeli towns, and, in return, Israel refrained from formidable military actions against GS. In WB, Israel had a different kind of truce, which was characterized by coordination between the security forces of the PA and Israel. While continuing during 2009 to close the crossings into the GS and to intensify its siege, Israel maintained its incursions and arrests in the WB.

As reported by Israel Security Agency—ISA (Shabak), there has been an especially sharp drop in rocket attacks during 2009: 566 rockets were launched this year until 24/12/2009, compared to 2,048 the year before, of which 406 were launched this year took place in January, during Operation Cast Lead. In the WB and Jerusalem there were 636 attacks registered in 2009, compared to 983 in 2008. More than 90% of the attacks in the WB and Jerusalem involved firebombs.⁸⁰

1. The Killed and Wounded

The brutal fire of the occupation forces lead to the killing of 1,181 Palestinians, 1,148 from GS and 33 from the WB, including Jerusalem. Amongst the killed, 473 were under 18 years of age and 126 women. Due to the Israeli war on GS, January 2009 was the bloodiest month of the entire Arab-Israeli conflict since 1967, as in it alone 1,076 persons were killed.⁸¹ The wounded during 2009 were 4,203 Palestinians, amongst whom 3,521 were in GS and 682 in the WB.⁸² According to a report by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS), the over all number of the Palestinian casualties during the war on Gaza (27/12/2008–19/1/2009) were 1,334 dead, of whom 417 children, 108 women and 120 senior citizens, and 14 paramedics, while the wounded were 5,450.⁸³ However, according to Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) 1,419 were killed, at least 5,300 were wounded, and 5,356 houses were destroyed, while a further 16 thousands were damaged.⁸⁴

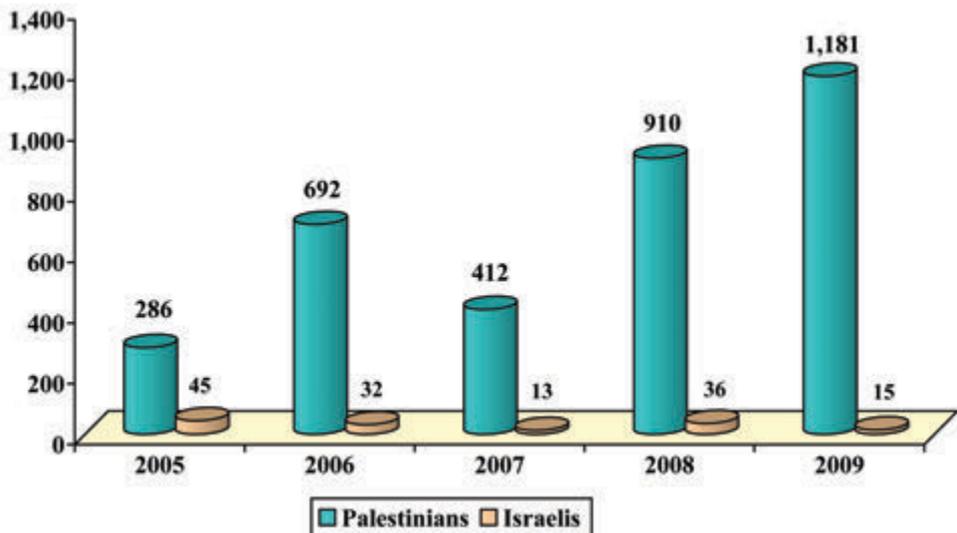
Correspondingly, the Shabak recorded that during 2009 fifteen Israelis were killed as a result of Palestinian operation amongst whom nine during the Israeli war on Gaza, a soldier was killed by an explosive device at the GS border line, five civilians and soldiers were killed by high trajectory launchings and four soldiers were killed by friendly fire. As for the injured Israelis during 2009, they were about 234, of whom 185 were wounded during the Cast Lead operation.⁸⁵ However, it is worth mentioning that the Palestinian resistance estimated that 80 Israeli soldiers were killed during the war on GS, in addition to several others and hundreds of casualties in the Israeli cities and towns surrounding the GS.⁸⁶

Table 10/2: The Killed and Wounded Among the Palestinians and the Israelis* 2005–2009⁸⁷

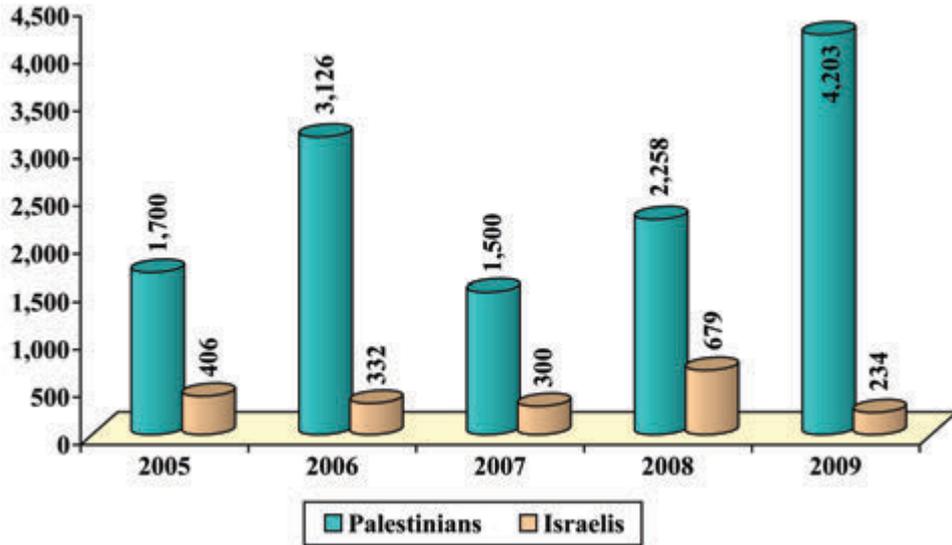
Year	Killed		Wounded	
	Palestinians	Israelis	Palestinians	Israelis
2005	286	45	1,700	406
2006	692	32	3,126	332
2007	412	13	1,500	300
2008	910	36	2,258	679
2009	1,181	15	4,203	234

* The numbers of Israelis, killed and wounded, are based on Israeli estimation.

The Killed Among the Palestinians and the Israelis 2005–2009



The Wounded Among the Palestinians and the Israelis 2005–2009



The testimonies published in *Haaretz* newspaper of several Israeli soldiers who participated in the war on Gaza reveal the brutality and the crimes committed by the Israeli army. They spoke of cases of killing in cold blood innocent and unarmed Palestinians, including children and women. “Their testimony runs counter to the Israel Defense Forces’ claims that Israeli troops observed a high level of moral behavior during the operation.” Interestingly these statements were of the soldiers who are graduates of the Yitzhak Rabin pre-military preparatory course at Oranim Academic College in Tivon.⁸⁸

It is worth noting that a Swedish journalist, Donald Bostron, published in an August 2009 issue of the Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet* a report “that Israeli soldiers are abducting Palestinians in order to steal their organs.” This led to a diplomatic tussle between Israel and Sweden. The report recorded testimonies in this respect by members of Palestinian families.⁸⁹ In the same vein, quoting the director of Abu Kabir forensic institute, an Israeli television channel reported that the Israeli army had taken during the 1990s parts of the skins of each body, be it Arab or Jew, that reached the institute to be transplanted in wounded or burned Israeli soldiers. The report said that the person in charge of this operation was an officer medical doctor Ariel Elad, a then member of the Knesset. The same report recorded the theft of the corneas of some of the dead bodies sent to the institute.⁹⁰

2. Prisoners and Detainees

Like its predecessor, 2009 was catastrophic for the detained Palestinians in the Israeli prisons, as by the end of the year their number totaled 7,500, amongst whom were 34 women, 310 children, 17 MPs and two ministers, in addition to several political activists. The prisoners from the WB totaled 6,630 (300 from Jerusalem), 750 from GS, and about 120 from the Arabs in Israel.⁹¹ Additionally, many were from different Arab nationalities, including five from the occupied Syrian Golan Heights,⁹² 27 from Jordan,⁹³ a Saudi detainee and many others from the Sudan and Egypt who crossed the borders for different reasons.⁹⁴ Amongst the detainees were 5,325 convicted in courts, of whom 800 received life imprisonment once or more, 1,865 awaiting trials, 304 administrative detainees, and six presumed by Israel to be “unlawful combatants.”⁹⁵

During 2009, the occupation authorities arrested about five thousand Palestinians, an average of 14 per day, while the average in the preceding year was 16 daily. Most of the arrests were in the WB and Jerusalem, 4,054 cases, while in GS 1,078 cases, including one thousand in January during the war on GS, of whom only 20 remained in the occupation prisons. In the same year, nearly 1,200 orders of new arrests or renewed administrative arrests were issued, while detainees from GS were dealt with as “unlawful combatants.” Moreover, the number of arrested fishermen in the high seas facing GS shores increased during 2009. Their boats and other fishing equipments were usually confiscated, and they were exposed to pressure and blackmail during the investigations. Besides, increasing numbers of patients were arrested while passing through Beit Hanoun (Eretz) crossing for treatment abroad, and they were often subjected to interrogation and pressure to cooperate with the occupation.⁹⁶

Table 11/2: The Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Jails 2009⁹⁷

No. of detainees on 1/1/2009	No. of detainees on 31/12/2009	Detainees during 2009		No. of women by the end of 2009	No. of children by the end of 2009
		WB	GS		
9,000	7,500	4,054	1,078	34	310

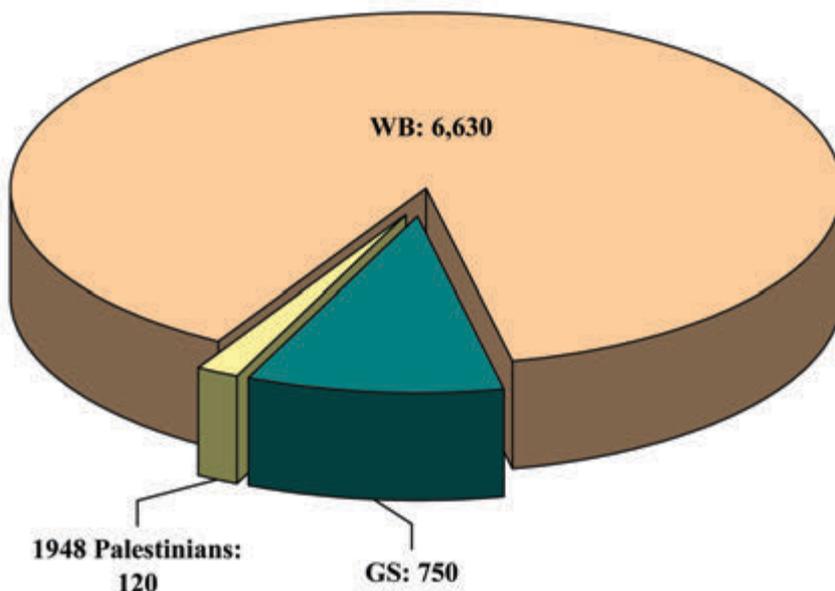
Table 12/2: The Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Jails According to Geographic Locations by the End of 2009⁹⁸

WB	GS	1948 Palestinians	Total
6,630	750	120	7,500

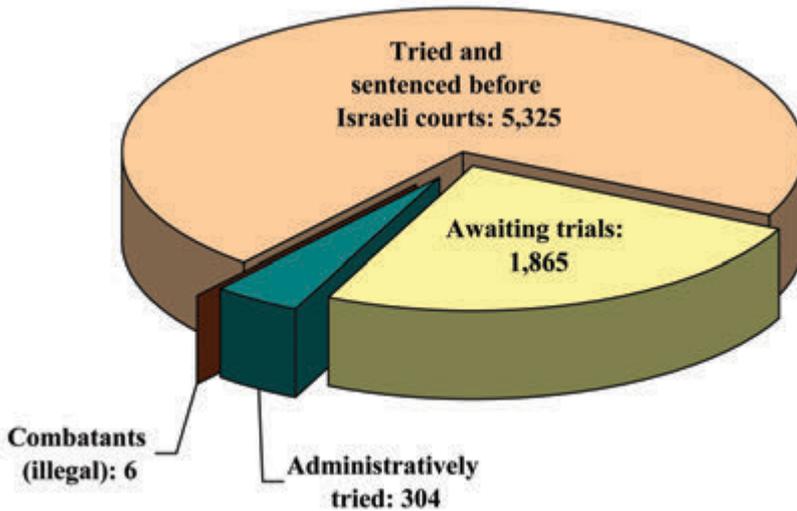
Table 13/2: The Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Jails According to Their Legal Status by the End of 2009⁹⁹

Tried and sentenced before Israeli courts	Administratively tried	Awaiting trials	Combatants (illegal)	Total
5,325	304	1,865	6	7,500

The Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Jails According to Geographic Locations by the End of 2009



The Prisoners and Detainees in Israeli Jails According to Their Legal Status by the End of 2009



Meanwhile, Hamas continued in 2009 the arrest of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit in GS. Since his arrest in June 2006, Hamas conditioned his release to be through a deal in which about one thousand Palestinian prisoners in the Israeli jails should be released. Notwithstanding the active German and Egyptian mediation, no deal was concluded during the year 2009. However, on receiving a video tape that demonstrated that Shalit was still alive under Hamas detention, the Israeli government released in October 20 Palestinian women detainees.¹⁰⁰

By the end of 2009, the negotiations for a deal faced three obstacles posed by the Israeli side. Objection to 50 detainees included in the 450 that are in Hamas' list, insistence to deport 130 of the 400 detainees that it previously agreed to release, and refusal to include in the deal any of the detainees who carry the Israel nationality.¹⁰¹

The conditions of the detainees deteriorated during 2009, because of the Israeli increasing oppressive measures, which included poor medical services, torture, refusal of one-on-one visits with the detainees by their relatives under the guise of the so-called "security prohibition," or collectively as was the case with the families of GS detainees. In addition, prisoners continued to have limited food, clothes and covers, and their personal cash was confiscated. A report by the

Palestinian Ministry of the Detainee's Affairs demonstrated that all the detainees were exposed to one of forms of psychological or physical torture, humiliation in public and in front of family members, and that the majority suffered more than one kind of torture. This was considered a constant policy towards those who were arrested or detained. Moreover, the report ascertained that all the Israeli security personnel who participated in the occupation operation were involved in these inhuman practices. The most dangerous development during 2009 in this respect was the formation of a ministerial committee to study the conditions of the detainees in order to design new ways and means to intensify pressure and misery on them, and to seek revenge on them. In 2009, 'Obeida Maher Dweik, a 25 year detainee, was murdered in an Israeli prison because of medical negligence. Though wounded when arrested, on 26/8/2009, he did not receive any medical treatment; on the contrary he was tortured until he succumbed to death on 13/9/2009.¹⁰²

Fourth: The Israeli Position Towards the Internal Palestinian Scene

Since the victory of Hamas in the PLC elections of 2007 and the defeat of Fatah, the Israelis found themselves dealing in a Palestinian setting that was engaged in a political and geographical split. Hamas controlled GS, but it was isolated politically and exposed to an Israeli, regional and international siege, while Fatah controlled WB with Israeli tacit recognition, and local, regional and international support. During the preceding year, 2008, the borders of the Israel with both GS and the WB remained relatively calm, and Israel maintained "the status of no peace no war" in its dealing with the Palestinians, without feeling an urgency for a peace settlement, especially after the end of its war on GS in January 2009.

During the year 2009, Israel strove to achieve a bundle of strategic objectives in the Palestinian arena. It tried to reach to a political settlement with the PA under the presidency of Mahmud 'Abbas, but according to its vision and conditions. This demonstrated that Israel was not serious in its peace advances for many reasons. If a settlement is to be at hand, the issues of the final settlement, like Jerusalem and the refugees, are bound to cause the collapse of any government coalition, be it led by Kadima or the Likud. Moreover, the then ruling coalition felt that time is in favor of Israel, because it had so far enabled it to impose many facts

on the ground, and to actively pursue its effort to secure the downfall of Hamas or, at least, to weaken its control on GS. Thus, Israel followed a double strategy in dealing with the internal Palestinian situation, which combines deterrence in dealing with Hamas and its government in GS, and to “seek a peace deal” with whom it viewed as “the moderates of the PLO” in the WB.

According to the estimate of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israeli policy in the WB was two-pronged: first was the Annapolis process, which did not achieve a permanent agreement yet succeeded in sustaining political momentum on the Palestinian issue and earning international support, including among the pragmatic Arab states. Second, efforts continued with the help of the international community to advance “state institution building” in the WB and improve the daily life of the Palestinian population, while insisting on the Palestinian fulfillment of their security obligations and preventing the consolidation of Hamas influence in the WB.¹⁰³

The Israeli policy during the course of 2009, which was to all intents and purposes the same as that of the international community and most of the regional powers:

offered Fatah an opportunity to present itself to the Palestinian people as an alternative to Hamas that is better able to advance Palestinian national political interests and effect a change in daily life (e.g., removal of roadblocks, greater freedom of movement, and an improved economic situation). Fatah’s leadership now expects that this development, along with efforts to rehabilitate the movement’s ideological and organizational frameworks—as expressed in the sixth convention—will help regain the public’s confidence. However, while Fatah’s success largely depends on a renewal and successful conclusion of the political process with Israel, the conditions for this do not currently exist. Israel demands that Fatah recognize its Jewish character and agree to an end to the conflict, yet at the same time continues with settlement expansion. The Fatah leadership lacks any real potential to relax its principles regarding the permanent agreement’s core issues, such as Jerusalem and the right of return...¹⁰⁴

In an article published by the Israeli writer Alex Fishman in *Yedioth Ahronoth* of 24/7/2009 revealed that during recent months a team of Israelis and Palestinians, together with a former member of Dayton’s team, has been meeting to draft a detailed security annex to the Geneva Document.¹⁰⁵ This annex “resolves the relations between the state and the state-to-be.” This is how, Fishman says, “sheep



and wolves are supposed to live together.” It is the only detailed security document that exists to which the Palestinians have agreed and will, it is reported, form the basis for the final status arrangements that will be proposed by President Obama for his final status agreement to be completed within two years. “This document,” explains Fishman, “is the closest thing to a practical and actual plan that was drafted by agreement by the Israelis and the Palestinians.” In terms of timing, the agreement is supposed to be implemented in full within 30 months. The main components of the security annex are:

1. The principle of non-militarization of the PA; precise details of what weaponry and equipment Palestinians may and may not possess.
2. A third security force to be brought in “as a balance.”
3. The stationing by Israel of an Israeli infantry battalion in the Jordan Valley.
4. The stationing of three multi-national battalions to be deployed along the Jordan Valley, with one battalion to be deployed along the Philadelphi Road in GS.
5. An “Israeli presence”—two early-warning stations—in the non-militarized Palestinian state.
6. The Israel Air Force would be able to carry out training flights over the WB and Israeli “involvement” at the border crossings between the Palestinian state, Egypt and Jordan would continue.¹⁰⁶

Correspondingly, Israeli policy versus Hamas and its government in GS did not change, despite the change in government after the 18th Knesset elections from a centrist government lead by Kadima to a rightist administration dominated by the Likud Party.¹⁰⁷ It continued to be based on three assumptions:

1. Hamas is irrevocably opposed to recognizing or coming to terms with Israel’s existence.
2. Economic, political, and military pressure will affect the Hamas regime either by prying away its popular base, forcing it to modify its behavior significantly, or (most desired and least likely) destroying it as an organization.
3. Direct talks with Hamas are pointless and likely to be counterproductive, because there is nothing to talk about. This assumption is reinforced by Hamas’s virtually identical stance with regard to its talking with Israel.¹⁰⁸

It worth noting here that Hamas has sent repeated signals that it is ready for a limited “lull” or a long term armistice that may extend for a decade.¹⁰⁹ Hamas offers these ideas within the framework of a peace settlement negotiated by Fatah, which gives the Palestinians dominance over the WB, GS and East Jerusalem, and to which Hamas raises no objections and is accepted by the Palestinians in a plebiscite.¹¹⁰

According to the estimates of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the year 2009, Israel’s initial objective in GS is to stop firing of missiles and to observe the international obligation of maintaining the three conditions of the Quartet in dealing with Hamas. But by the end of the lull in December 2008, Israel faced squarely the two choices it had. It could have tried to completely eradicate Hamas and its infrastructure. Alternatively, it could have accepted what most military and political analysts had been saying for several years—that Hamas could not be destroyed militarily. Hence, Israel launched its war on GS, codenamed “Cast Lead,” but it failed, and Israel was obliged to withdraw, thanks to the bravery and steadfastness of the resistance. Israel never tried to reoccupy GS throughout the year 2009.¹¹¹

The Israeli assessment was that the results of the fighting should be leveraged to strengthen Israeli deterrence, establish a stable security situation without any agreement with Hamas, and intensify efforts to prevent Hamas’ rearmament. It was recommended that the Egyptian and international role in preventing smuggling be strengthened, and that the international effort be bolstered to prevent a humanitarian crisis in GS. Pressure on the civilian population should be reduced with the cooperation of the PA and in a way that will not translate into a strengthening of Hamas.¹¹² However, in the wake of Operation Cast Lead, Hamas has been deterred from any further military confrontation with Israel that might topple its government, and aspired to preserve security calm. Correspondingly, Israel has adopted a policy that strengthens it both at home and abroad: through Egypt it is conducting an indirect dialogue with Hamas to formulate a deal for the release of the captive soldier Gilad Shalit, and it is avoiding military action to defeat it. In a parallel move, Israel continued its effort to weaken Hamas, and prohibit its rearmament, besides its siege of GS.¹¹³

The war brought back to the forefront the political problem that Israel had evaded to respond to before the war, namely, how Hamas and Israel can “co-exist” in the foreseeable future as none of them can uproot the other? Many analysts opined that it:

should have been clear to Israel, or to anyone who was familiar with Hamas's thinking, death and destruction would not, under virtually any circumstances, persuade Hamas's leadership or its rank and file to acquiesce to permanent Israeli control or to shift their allegiance to Fatah. In fact, the results following the end of hostilities were predictable: Hamas was politically strengthened, Fatah was further weakened, and Israel was further isolated.¹¹⁴

Before and after the war, Israel had persistently maintained that the threat that GS will pose in the next stage will be, with or without Hamas consent, closely associated with the "Worldwide or Global Jihad" organizations notably al-Qaeda. This deliberate association between GS and the activities of al-Qaeda against American allies was triggered by the Israeli drive to broaden the international targeting of Hamas. It is also in line with a study conducted for Washington Institute for Near East Policy by Yoram Cohen, the former deputy director of ISA, and Matthew Levitt, the American former deputy assistant treasury secretary for intelligence and analysis, which maintained that al-Qaeda's fighters in Iraq who will leave the country after the American withdrawal will seek refuge in GS. The study had also exaggerated the *Salafi-Jihadi* phenomenon in GS and presented the *Salafi-Jihadi* groups as an evil destructive force that may participate at any time in attacking Israel and American allies in the region.¹¹⁵

A reading of the sequence of events suggests that the Palestinian schism and the stalemate in the reconciliation effort will continue to govern the Israeli position towards the domestic Palestinian situation during 2010. However, the Israeli double strategy is unlikely to lead to a change in the balance of power in the Palestinian scene in favor of the PA in Ramallah for many reasons, of which the most important are the following: First, the continuous Israeli disregard to the Palestinian rights, as the best that Israel may concede in a peace settlement will not at best be acceptable to the most "moderate" Palestinians. Secondly, most of the Palestinians view the security coordination between the PA and Israel as a consolidation of the occupation, and that it is essentially directed against a Palestinian partner, namely Hamas. All this is likely to drain in future the popularity of Abu Mazin and Fatah, and to erode the gains that the PA reaped as a result of assuming the security responsibility in several cities in the WB, and from removing the barriers and "normalizing daily life." It, moreover, will probably impress upon the Palestinians that Fatah had once more, after Oslo Accords, failed to terminate the occupation via negotiations and the peace path, which means the stagnation of the peace process and the continuation of the

de facto Israeli policy, thus making the probability of the establishment of a Palestinian state an impossible mission. There is a consensus among experts in political sociology that a politico-social impasse in a place normally expresses itself in a violent military manner. In fact, the possibility of the renewal of the Palestinian *Intifadah* (uprising) against Israel in the WB had been frequently entertained during late 2009 and early 2010.

Correspondingly, by the end of 2009, it had been persistently maintained that Israel may launch against GS a war of the kind that it did at the beginning of the year. This probability was emphasized in a defiant tone by a number of Israeli political and military leaders. Additionally were Israel's targeting, after every launching of a missile from GS, some of the Palestinian activists, and the limited and virtually routine bombardment operations throughout the years on the tunnels' district along the Egyptian borders. Hence, the question is whether Israel will tend in 2010 to intensify its pressure and consolidate its deterrent policy against Hamas, or opt for a total aggression as it earlier did? A careful reading of the sequence of events and connecting them with each other gives us sufficient evidence to argue that Israel will be inclined towards the former option rather than engaging itself in a new war. For it is still the party that benefits from the Palestinian geographical and political schism. Furthermore, Israel is not sure that the occupation of GS and the collapse of Hamas would lead to quick and decisive outcome. Besides, Israel is still in a state of shock by Goldstone Report on its latest war on GS. Over and above all this, Israel's "restrained" behavior, so to speak, synchronizes with Egypt's intensification of the siege and construction of the so-called "steel wall" on its borders with GS.

Fifth: The Path of the Political Settlement

In a nutshell, the political stagnation that started in 2008 had continued in 2009, and the PA itself had confessed that the negotiations had reached to a virtual deadlock. This is attributed to three main reasons:

1. The scandals that besieged the government of Ehud Olmert at the end of its term and lead to its downfall. Additionally was the failure of his successor Tzipi Livni to form a government, which led to early elections that brought an ultra-right government under the premiership of Benjamin Netanyahu, which is the most extreme government in the history of Israel.

2. The declaration by the PA of the stoppage of negotiations with Israel in protest of its war on GS in late 2008 and early 2009.
3. The growing disappointment in the administration of Barack Obama and his electoral slogan of change. His undertaken during the election campaign to swiftly move to revive the peace process and resume negotiations, and to give priority to conclude a Palestinian-Israeli agreement during his presidency had soon vanished. His administration quickly retreated from those pledges, especially the stoppage of building settlements. Thus, till the end of 2009, no success was recorded for the American effort to resume the negotiations, on the contrary, Israel aggressively pursued its hostile military and political agenda. America's quick retreat indicates the probability that it lower the ceiling of its expectations. This means that it will focus on developing modest confidence building measures, and to strive to reduce the losses in anticipation of an opportune time to resume the negotiations.

Amongst other objectives, the war on GS, which continued during the opening part of 2009, aimed at forcing the Palestinians to the negotiation table to conclude an agreement that achieves the gist of the American-Israeli goals and interests at the expense of the fundamental rights and interests of the Palestinians. As Tzipi Livni, the former minister of foreign affairs and leader of Kadima, used to say, this agreement will be "a shelf agreement,"¹¹⁶ which means that the conclusion of a deal does not necessarily mean that it will be hurriedly implemented. Rather the Israeli strategy is to conclude an agreement at this time of Palestinian schism, but the implementation would have to await the restoration of authority in GS to the PA, that should demonstrate its ability to build strong institutions capable of fighting "terrorism," liquidation of its infrastructure, confiscation of its weapons and arrest of its personnel.

The position of Barack Obama on the Israeli war on GS was disappointing. The sheer human sympathy that he voiced before officially assuming his presidency, on 20/1/2010, remained basically the same after he has officially taken the presidency. For he focused on a ceasefire, according to the Israeli conditions, on the stoppage of smuggling of weapons to GS, on taking security and international measures that deprive the resistance from the acquisition of armaments, and the dependence of lifting the siege, the reconstruction effort and the achievement of reconciliation on the acceptance of Hamas, or the government in which it may participate, of the Quartet's conditions.

However, the above adverse narrative does not necessarily belittle the change that Obama had achieved early in his presidency, namely the priority that he gave to the issue of peace in the Middle East at large, particularly the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. He called several leaders of the region, including the Palestinian President, besides appointing the presumed pragmatic, serious and balanced George Mitchel as his special peace envoy to the region.

However, other developments indicated that the new American President did not conclusively decide his line of policy on the Palestinian issue. For he had also appointed the popularly known friend of Israel Hillary Clinton as his secretary of state, as well as a number of pro-Israel advisors, of whom the most prominent is Dennis Ross. Moreover, Obama emphasized the priority of the security of Israel and the American strategic alliance with it, and rejected any “violence” against it. The dilemma of Obama is that while on one side aspiring to achieve peace in the Middle that his predecessors failed to attain, he, on the other hand, does not want to apply the necessary pressure on Israel. He plans to convince it through offering some incentives and exercising light pressure, and by emphasizing that the establishment of a Palestinian state has become an important prerequisite to American national security, and that of Israel too.

This duplicity characterizes the American policy in the era of Obama, and may lead to its failure in future. The good intentions of the American President alone are not enough.

However, Obama had given noticeable attention to the political process, as seen in the shuttle diplomacy by his peace envoy George Mitchel, the frequent visits of his Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and his own declarations and addresses, particularly his historic speech in the University of Cairo. In his speech, he emphasized the necessity of seeking “a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world; one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect.” He also expressed that there is “no doubt: the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable.” and that he is committed to achieve peace, and added, “The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop.”¹¹⁷

Obama’s administration had exerted considerable effort to convince the Israeli government to avail the necessary prerequisites for the resumption and success of the peace process in return for steps towards normalizing Arab relations with it.

He, moreover, promised to present a tangible peace plan that includes short phases and guarantees for its implementation.

However, the Israeli intransigence constituted a formidable stumbling block to the American effort, particularly so after the election of Netanyahu's government. It is reputed to be one of the most extremist, racist and hostile governments in the history of Israel, whose priority is for security, expansion and economic peace. It, moreover, depends on a broad political and parliamentary base, and the opposition, which lacks a strong leader, is too weak to challenge it. This is due to the diminishing influence of the leftist parties and the peace camp, and the increasing bickering within Kadima, the major opposition party.

The first half of 2009 witnessed tension in the American-Israeli relations that reached its zenith in the first stormy meeting between Obama and Netanyahu, after which the latter was compelled, in an address that he gave in June 2009 in Ilan University, to accept the establishment of a Palestinian state, but accompanied this presumable retreat with impossible conditions. This made his acceptance of a Palestinian political entity merely formal and practically meaningless. Amongst what he mentioned in this addresses were:¹⁸

1. A fundamental prerequisite for ending the conflict is a public, binding and unequivocal Palestinian recognition of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people...
2. There must also be a clear understanding that the Palestinian refugee problem will be resolved outside Israel's borders...
3. Judea and Samaria, the places where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, David and Solomon, and Isaiah and Jeremiah lived, are not alien to us. This is the land of our forefathers... Within this homeland lives a large Palestinian community. We do not want to rule over them... [But] the territory under Palestinian control must be demilitarized with ironclad security provisions for Israel...
4. Israel needs defensible borders [i.e., the rejection of the 4th June, 1967 frontiers]...
5. Jerusalem must remain the united capital of Israel with continued religious freedom for all faiths...
6. The territorial question will be discussed as part of the final peace agreement. In the meantime, we have no intention of building new settlements or of expropriating additional land for existing

settlements. But there is a need to enable the residents to live normal lives, to allow mothers and fathers to raise their children like families elsewhere. The settlers are neither the enemies of the people nor the enemies of peace. Rather, they are an integral part of our people, a principled, pioneering and Zionist public...

7. The Palestinians must decide between the path of peace and the path of Hamas. The Palestinian Authority will have to establish the rule of law in Gaza and overcome Hamas. Israel will not sit at the negotiating table with terrorists who seek their destruction...

Though containing something new, Netanyahu's conditions do not reflect a paramount change, they are too demanding for any Palestinian to accept. However, they help the Israeli government to gain the satisfaction of the American administration, but without antagonizing the extremists in Israel or threatening the survival of Netanyahu's government.

What Netanyahu could not say was, however, voiced by Avigdor Lieberman, the minister of foreign affairs,¹¹⁹ who emphasized the impossibility of resolving the conflict during the coming two decades. Moreover, he doubted the legitimacy of Abu Mazin because he does not control GS, and even questioned his legitimacy in the WB.

To block the American and international pressure, Israel took, after months of hesitation, three major steps:

1. To announce the acceptance of the establishment of a demilitarized Palestinian state if the Palestinians accepted the Israeli conditions.
2. A ten month moratorium on new residential housing construction in the WB, starting late November 2009, which does not include Jerusalem, settlement units in progress and public facilities.
3. To initiate a series of measures to improve the living conditions of the Palestinians, namely removal of earth mounds, to ease movement within the WB, and with the outside world and Israel, and to agree to improve the economic conditions.

Though not changing the essence of Israeli policy, these steps aborted the growing international pressure on Israel, and channeled it, for sometime at least, towards the Palestinian side.

This transfer had become feasible because of the numerous internal and external political and economic difficulties that the American administration had confronted: the opposition of some influential quarters in America to Obama's Health Care



Reform Bill, the formidable difficulties in the conduct of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the deteriorating situation in Pakistan, Iran and other parts of the world. Hence, Obama's administration was unable to resist the pressure of Israel and America's pro-Israel lobby. The ultimate outcome was the withdrawal of the American demand to stop the settlement building, and the inability of the American administration to submit a tangible peace initiative to be imposed on both sides.

The American retraction had shocked the Palestinian leadership, who had betted on the presumably new American position and the strength that it thought to have gained after Fatah's sixth congress, and the holding of a special session of the PNC to fill the vacant posts in the Executive Committee of the PLO. Hence, the PA refused to resume the negotiations with Israel unless and until it adheres to three obligations spelled out in the Road Map, which it never did since this plan was drawn five years ago. These obligations were:¹²⁰

- Total settlement freeze, including natural growth, and especially in Jerusalem.
- Adherence to a specific and clear reference to the peace process.
- To resume the forthcoming negotiations from the point that they stopped at in the previous round.

The American administration had committed three additional errors of judgment that weakened the Palestinian president and impelled him to declare that he will not run for the presidency in the next elections. By then it was difficult for Abu Mazin to resume the negotiations on the Israeli conditions. Instead, he rejected to be satisfied by a written American and international guarantee to establish a Palestinian state, and insisted that all issues be submitted to the negotiation table, including Jerusalem and the refugees, and to conclude a deal within two years.

These American errors of judgment were:

1. Pressing the Palestinian president to participate in a tripartite meeting with Obama and Netanyahu, held in September 2009. Despite the fact that Abu Mazin had more than once declared that he will not meet Netanyahu unless and until he declares a total stoppage of the settlement.
2. Pressure on the Palestinian president to postpone the discussion of Goldstone Report, which provoked a storm of anger that affected the credibility and popularity of Abu Mazin, and constituted a barrier to any future Palestinian flexibility.
3. Obstructing the process of the national reconciliation on the basis of the Egyptian proposal and before the agreement on the resumption of the

negotiations. The participation, also, in stalling over proposed prisoner exchange, so that Hamas will not be strengthened at the expense of Abu Mazin and the PA.

This pushed the US administration in a clear predicament. For it failed to merely resume the negotiations, and lost the first round with Israel. By the beginning of 2010, it found itself facing three scenarios:

- The first scenario is to accept the continuation of stagnation in the peace process, while intensifying the efforts to minimize the damage. To focus also, at this stage, on a transitional solution that embodies modest steps towards confidence building, taken by both the Israeli and Palestinian governments. To encourage the latter to build the state's institutions in order to reach a status in which all parties are ready to resume negotiations and conclude a peace agreement. This means to give up Obama's initial objective of resolving the conflict, and to endorse the advice of Dennis Ross, Martin Indyk,¹²¹ and other pro-Israeli individuals and groups in the USA, i.e., to focus on the administration of the conflict but avoid the risk of resolving it, while striving to revive the peace process in a way that there would be a process but not necessarily a peace.
- The second scenario: to continue pressure on President Abu Mazin until he accepts the resumption of the negotiations without an Israeli commitment to freeze the settlements notwithstanding his repeated pledges not to do so. In other words that he be satisfied with Arab and international guarantees and aid that would hopefully justify this move. In return the president will be rewarded by several measures of confidence building, such as restoring the situation as it was before 28/9/2000, release of a group of detainees, improve the economic conditions, and a pledge to focus the negotiations on the issue of the borders, and to strive to settle it before the end of the ten month moratorium on new residential housing construction in the WB, that is scheduled to expire early July 2010.
- The third scenario: To submit a concrete peace initiative that includes the objectives of the peace process, implementation schedules, the phases and the guarantees. It combines the policy of the carrot and stick that would expectedly stimulate both parties to take risks, but if they do not have the courage to do so, to apply pressure on them until they accept the American initiative.

However, we have sufficient evidence to expect that the first scenario will be the most likely one. For even if the American administration has good intentions, it lacks the necessary will to exert pressure, particularly on Israel. But without such pressure no real progress in the peace process will be achieved. What supports this hypothesis is a statement that Abu Mazin said before Fatah's Revolutionary Council, namely that either Israel undertakes the settlement building freeze or America interferes to declare the end of the game.¹²²

But this dubious situation could not possibly continue forever, or even for a long period, it is bound to change. Though flourishing economically and militarily, and an *Intifadah* is so farfetched that Israeli security leaders boastfully said that the year 2009 was the quietest in a decade (not more than 15 Israeli individuals were killed during the year), Israel is indeed worried about its existence in the long run. This is particularly so because of the rising credibility and strength of the resistance forces, the Palestinian internal demographic growth and the probability of an international shift in favor of the resistance. The stagnation of the peace process may also open the way for other alternatives, specially a united Palestinian resistance and the restoration of the Arab and international dimensions of the Palestinian issue. Thus, it may help all the parties and states that are against the peace process, like Iran, Hamas and Hizbullah, and it will weaken their moderate counterparts. Furthermore, at one stage in future, the American and Israeli relations with Iran may become so tense that the international sanctions against Iran would be tightened, and the military option against it may become viable, a development that could probably persuade the American administration to actively work for the resumption and success of the negotiations to crystallize a global-Arab-Israeli alliance against Iran.

Israel favors the continuation of the negotiations, but it is not in a hurry to reach to final results and commitments. Its strategy is, in fact, based on the administration of the crisis rather than its resolution as long as it is capable of imposing realities on the ground and continuing its processes of Judaization and Israelization. But Israel is concerned that the Palestinians may give up on the peace settlement track and the two-state solution, that they resort to other alternatives such as the resistance or the one state solution. Moreover, Israel and its legitimacy could face increasing regional and international challenges.

It is worth noting at this juncture that the American administration had over celebrated the mockery of the partial and temporary settlement building freeze,

and Hillary Clinton had even considered it an unprecedented move. Hence forth, America moved from pressing Israel to twisting the arms of the Palestinians.

In this analysis it is not enough to address developments in the American, Israeli and Palestinians fronts only, but it is essential to look into their Arab and international counterparts, especially the partners of the Quartet.

Following the initial bold movements of Obama's administration on the Palestinian crisis, the Arab and international roles towards the issue had retracted, and became confined to supporting the American effort on the basis that it was highly expected to succeed. But they soon came back to the scene after America's quick retreat from its demand of the settlement building freeze and pledge to submit a peace initiative. The US was confronted by strong and intransigent opposition from Israel and the American Jewish lobby.

The European Union (EU) issued a declaration which emphasized that the "Council recalls that it has never recognized the annexation of East Jerusalem. If there is to be a genuine peace, a way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states." Furthermore, the "Council reiterates that settlements, the separation barrier where built on occupied land, demolition of homes and evictions are illegal under international law, constitute an obstacle to peace and threaten to make a two-state solution impossible." It added that "The European Union will not recognise any changes to the pre-1967 borders including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties." The European Union also called for "the urgent resumption of negotiations that will lead, within an agreed time-frame, to a two-state solution with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security."¹²³

France played an active role in this respect, especially after the stumbling of the American efforts. It called for an international conference, similar to that of Annapolis of 2007, to activate the peace process. But this call was unsuccessful because of the huge gap between the Palestinian and Israeli positions on the resumption of the negotiations.

Following Annapolis, Russia had also suggested a conference in Moscow, which, had, in fact, already been accepted internationally in recognition of the country's positive contribution in the peace process. For Russia had maintained a balanced role, whereby it demanded the end of the occupation and the establishment of a

Palestinian state. Moreover, it viewed the settlement as illegal, and kept a channel of communication with Hamas.

The Quartet was during the first half of 2009 rather passive, it only supported the American effort. But when it proved to be unproductive, and the American envoy had failed to persuade Israel to resume the negotiations, the Quartet started to step in. But, on the whole, its role was ineffective as it pursued the policy of “wait and see.”

What deserves attention during 2009 is that the Arab countries—individually and collectively—had virtually ignored the Arab peace initiative, which had only been verbally and casually referred to in announcements and conferences. It appeared to have served its purpose and was no longer the basis of Arab move towards peace, but simply a publicity stunt to absorb the American fury against the Arabs and Muslims after the events of 11/9/2001, and not a final Arab initiative to settle the conflict. If the Arabs do not seriously view their initiative, then who cares?

The Syrian-Israeli path remained stagnant due to the intransigence of the new Israeli government—even more than its predecessor—and the deterioration in Turkey’s relations with Israel, which obstructed the former’s mediation between the two countries.

The Arab position was in a status of limbo and disarray, divided between a call for the resumption of the negotiations and another of working towards the crystallization of a united Arab position. This was reflected in the Arab decline to endorse the Palestinians initiative to ask the UN Security Council to patronize a resolution that recognizes the Palestinian state and draw its borders.

What is confusing about Abu Mazin’s position is that while admitting that the negotiations were deadlocked, he does not call for another option, nor does he initiate a process to select a successor as long as he will not run for the next elections, and after declaring that he, like his predecessor Yasir ‘Arafat, will be assassinated. He even vaguely repeated that the alternative to negotiations is negotiations and to peace is peace, and added, “I will not allow a new *Intifada*. As long as I’m in office, I will not allow anybody to start a new *Intifada*. Never never. But if I leave, it’s no longer my responsibility and I can’t make any guarantees. It could happen.” He, also, told “the Israeli Minister of Defense, Ehud Barak, that he can do an undeclared but total moratorium for five months without announcing it,

without publicity, just tell the Americans. But it must be a total freeze that includes East Jerusalem.”¹²⁴ But then later he reduced the duration to three months only. This further weakens Abu Mazin’s position, as the delay of settlement building could be tolerated for such a short period if a final peace settlement is guaranteed during it. Moreover, Abu Mazin appears to have rejected the American proposal of indirect negotiations unless he finds an Arab cover, which practically means that he will eventually accept to resume the negotiations without prior conditions, a development that would further tarnishes his image among the Palestinians, and assures the Israelis of their ability to impose their conditions. This was further demonstrated by the Arab decision to allow indirect negotiations under American patronage for four months. However, the quick Israeli approval of building 1,600 housing units had aborted these negotiations.

An agreement is, in fact, almost impossible because of the extreme Israeli demands: to liquidate the issue of the Palestinian refugees, withdrawal to secured recognized borders but after the annexation of the Jordan Valley and surrounding lands, including Jerusalem, which constitutes not less than 40% of the WB,¹²⁵ and the establishment of a Palestinian state under Israeli protection. If Abu Mazin does not agree to resume the negotiations on Israeli terms, the alternative will then be an Israeli political, economic and media campaign that dismisses the PA as being against peace, and an Israeli drive to replace Abu Mazin by a leadership that accepts the resumption of negotiations, and an Israeli-tailored solution.

Meanwhile, some Israeli circles and individuals advocated resort to unilateral action¹²⁶ or partial solutions, whereby Israel will voluntarily withdraw from areas that it is willing to forgo in a final settlement. Such a course imposes the Israeli vision of a final peace settlement, while at the same time appears to be harmful to the peace settlement track and the prospect of reducing the misery and hardship imposed on the Palestinians. This probability should not be dropped, especially after fears of a unilateral disengagement from the GS had substantially retracted in that environment of Palestinian political and geographical schism.

Though absolutely pessimistic about the prospects of the negotiations during the era of Netanyahu, Abu Mazin has not yet discarded the option of negotiations. He is just crossing his fingers for an American-European-international pressure on Israel to concede the prerequisites of peace and a final settlement, which will lead

to more achievements than pursuing the other way of resuming the negotiations on Israeli dictates. Or, alternatively, to allow the current status to drift until a change will somehow take place, either by the assumption of power in Israel by a new government that accepts what the present one rejects, the twisting of the hand of Israel by much stronger international pressure, or the organization of a new elections in which Abu Mazin does not run for the presidency, thus a new leadership will bear the responsibility.

The dilemma is that nobody knows when the Palestinian elections will be held if the present environment of schism and disarray prevails. Moreover, the awaiting for new initiatives, particularly from the others is not an effective but a harmful policy, as it may lead to the reluctant acceptance of what the Palestinian leadership currently rejects, or to the complete collapse of the totality of the situation.

Under these dangerous conditions, the Palestinian are urgently required to gallantly have the initiative in their own hands, and to do all that they should and could to rescue their cause, and gain for it the necessary Arab and international support.

The below eight points,¹²⁷ which Abu Mazin had considered as basis for the peace process, provide a ceiling that neither he nor any other Palestinian president should supersede:

1. The United Nations resolutions on the conflict, the Road Map, the Arab peace initiative and the vision of a two-state solution based on the Security Council resolutions 242, 338 and 1515, while making use of any progress achieved in Camp David, Taba and Annapolis talks.
2. The fixation of the borders should be based on the pre-fourth of June, 1967 borders, though lands may be swapped in kind or cash without affecting the water rights or the geographical contact between the WB and GS.
3. East Jerusalem is the capital of the Palestinian state, without infringing the freedom of others to the sacred lands.
4. A just settlement for the cause of the Palestinian refugees as mentioned in the Arab peace initiative, which became part of the Road Map.
5. The existence of the Jewish settlements in the lands of the Palestinian state is illegal and illegitimate.
6. Security arrangements be undertaken by a third partner along the borders between the Israeli and Palestinian states.

7. The resolution of the water issue in accordance with international law, and the right of the Palestinian state to control its water sources, air space and all that it possesses beneath and above the earth, and the strive towards regional cooperation on the water issue.
8. To close down the issue of the detainees by releasing all of them.

Some serious observations may be recorded on these points. First, the provision of the swapping of lands may be understood as an acceptance of annexing the major settlement blocks in Jerusalem to Israel in a final peace settlement. Moreover, the acceptance of a fair and “mutually agreed” settlement of the refugees’ may give the upper hand to Israel. It will never accept their return, while this is a matter of principle, an issue of natural, legal and historical right that is supported by the international legitimacy, as spelled out in resolution 194, which should be yielded to. However, notwithstanding these and other drawbacks, these eight provisions represent the minimum for the most moderate Palestinians. But they are far away from what Israel may accept, especially at this juncture when the country is ruled by the extremist and racist government of Netanyahu.

The gigantic difference between the Palestinians prerequisites¹²⁸ and those which the Israelis are willing to yield makes a resolution of the Palestinian issue extremely farfetched, thus the establishment of a Palestinian state is not at hand. This gap can not be bridged through negotiations only, but by a persistent strive to change the balance of power. Hence, the crystallization of a new Palestinians strategy that restores the credibility of the national Palestinian agenda, namely, to end the occupation by all suitable means, emphasis on the right of return, the establishment of the Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital and the guarantee of rights and equality to the 1948 Palestinians.

The required strategy should capitalize all the means and abilities of the Palestinian people; it gives priority to the ending of the schism and the restoration of unity on the basis of partnership in the leadership, and to be based on democracy, multiplicity, diversity and fair competition. It should guarantee equality, freedom of women and the media, the rule of law, and to refer to the people periodically in fair and free elections that are based on consensus and on a single fundamental principle, the supreme national interest.

The future of a peace settlement depends on regional and global developments. If the Iranian nuclear issue is settled, a specific scenario will emerge, but if it is not,

the door will be open for tightening the sanctions and possibly a war launched by Israel alone or jointly with the USA and some international forces against Iran. If such a war erupts, nobody can forecast its repercussions, but the region will never be the same, irrespective of the outcome of such a war.

The mere suspension of the negotiations, without crystallizing a new strategy that presents a comprehensive alternative that assembles all Palestinian-Arab sources of strength and pressure, will place the Palestinian case in a state of confusion. There will be a hesitation between verbal extremism, hasty, contradictory and vague steps, and the probability of quick and unjustified rush to the resumption of negotiations. With such a fragile political base that has no alternative to the peace track but the peace track, it will be impossible to resist the American-Israeli pressure. This makes the scenario of the resumption of negotiations viable, but only as an excuse to descend from a top of the tree, without presenting effective exits that are capable of achieving the Palestinian national agenda.

The retrogression of the Arab role in 2009 to such an extent that the Arab peace initiative was neither pursued nor withdrawn, but completely disregarded, reveals the Arab paralysis and weakness at a time when the Iranian and Turkish roles are ascending.

In spite of the return of Palestinians to the indirect peace talks, and then to direct talks with the Israelis in 2010, no substantial progress was made. A great setback for the peace process occurred, when Israel insisted that it will not renew the moratorium in the WB, which ended on 26/9/2010. The Israelis continued their building settlements despite the American pressures and incentives. In addition, while the Obama administration announced that it failed to persuade the Israelis to renew the moratorium, it called for the resumption of indirect talks where US officials would shuttle back and forth between the two sides.

As for the Palestinians who were frustrated by the stagnated peace process, the Israeli obstinacy and the US failure, they rejected to return to negotiations. These futile negotiations lack the final reference for the peace process at a time when the occupation continues to expropriate Palestinian lands and create facts on the ground. There were calls among the Palestinian leadership to seek other solutions and alternatives, such as asking the UN and the Security Council to recognize

a Palestinian state on the borders of 4/6/1967. Other threats of dissolving the PA's government escalated during October and November 2010. Although they were not serious, they certainly expressed indignation and concern among the Palestinian leadership, and were attempts to pressure politically both the Israelis and Americans.

Conclusion

The internal scene in 2009 witnessed—amidst the war on GS—the 18th Knesset elections, which led to a paramount supremacy of the rightist parties, specially the Likud and Yisrael Beiteinu, while the leftist parties retracted, particularly the Labor Party.

Within the Israeli partisan levels, the failure to call Tzipi Livni, the leader of Kadima, to form the new government had its repercussions on the party's institutions and organizations. It led, during 2009, to such deep splits within its ranks that some analysts and political observers expected the party's eventual disintegration. In the same vein, the Labor Party experienced an internal revolt led by five of its members, who were dissatisfied with the orientation of its leader, Ehud Barak, whom they accused of dragging the party to a rightist government, thus losing its compass and values.

In the light of the global recession, the Israeli economy achieved in 2009 a measure of confidence, particularly since the second quarter of the year. The economy was shielded from the global downturn by the absence of prior housing or bank credit booms, high household savings rates, and the fact that investment goods and consumer durables—demand for which contracted sharply—are mostly imported from abroad. But the strength of output also owes much to the public debt reduction and structural reforms of the past decade, as well as the specific policy responses to the crisis.

On the security level, the Israeli military institutions continued during 2009 to actively implement the Tefen 2012 plan that was submitted in 2007 after the summer 2006 war on Lebanon. However, the Israeli security institutions had been bothered throughout the year 2009 by five obsessions that they focused on: the general Palestinian scene, Iran and its nuclear issue, the security dimensions of



the Obama administration's Middle East policy, the armament of what Israel calls "radical forces in the region," in an obvious reference to Hamas and Hizbullah and, finally, stability in neighboring Arab states.

With regard to the Palestinian internal scene, Israel tried to capitalize the domestic Palestinian political and geographical schism. It pursued a dual strategy that combines between "peace settlement" and "deterrence." It tried to keep the path of political settlement alive, but with a drive to impose its vision and conditions which had, however, demonstrated the insincerity of Israel to conclude a deal. Correspondingly, it tried to crush, or at least weaken, Hamas' control of GS through military means and by a suffocating siege.

In short, the peace track during 2009 was characterized by a state of stagnation that had started late in 2008. The retrogression of the Arab role prevailed to such an extent that the Arab peace initiative was neither activated nor withdrawn; in fact it was to all intents and purposes totally ignored. During 2010, frustration increased concerning the peace process. A deadlock was reached, when Israel insisted that it will not renew the moratorium in the WB, which ended on 26/9/2010; and when the US failed to halt the Israeli building of settlements, despite the American pressures and incentives.

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- ³ *Al-Hayat*, 30/1/2009. It is pointed out here that even with the increase in the right wing supporters in Israel, a poll conducted by *Haaretz* in the beginning of November showed that 57% of the right wing have the will to conduct dialogue with Hamas, see *Haaretz*, 13/11/2009; and *Felesteen*, 14/11/2009.
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- ¹³ Policy Guidelines of 32nd Government of Israel, site of Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 31/3/2009, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Current+Government+of+Israel/Policy_guidelines_of_32nd_Israeli_government_2_April_2009.htm
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- ¹⁶ *Alrai*, Amman, 2/4/2009.
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- ¹⁸ For the poll and the views of politicians in the speech of Netanyahu, see *Haaretz*, from the date of 15/6/2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasite/spages/1093059.html>
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Chapter Three

The Palestinian Issue and the Arab World

The Palestinian Issue and the Arab World

Introduction

None of the Arab countries worked, in 2009 and 2010, to become an active part of the political equation pertaining to the Palestinian issue. This was despite the continuous Israeli threats to the Palestinian issue; including the occupation and siege, the intensive plans of settlement building and Judaization particularly in Jerusalem and the rest of the WB, not to mention the Palestinian schism and the setbacks that faced the peace settlement track. It is clear that the weakness and divisions in the Arab world held the Arab regimes from achieving any positive, tangible results. The Arab efforts, in 2009 and 2010, were focused on bridging the Palestinian gap, especially by Egypt, in addition to endorsing the Arab Peace Initiative and supporting the Palestinian negotiator in the peace settlement track. On the other hand, Syria continued to embrace the “refusal front” (*al-mumana‘ah*) and resistance groups opposed to the Oslo Agreement.

This chapter displays the Arab stances vis-à-vis the Palestinian issue during 2009 and part of 2010, including the performance of the Arab League and the stances of some Arab countries, particularly KSA and the frontline countries. Moreover, it displays the popular positions and developments of normalization with Israel.

First: The Stands of the Arab League and the Arab Summit

The division in the Arab world continued in 2009 and it cast its shadows on the performance of the Arab League regarding the Palestinian issue. This was evident in the failure of the Arab League to bring the Palestinian factions together or put an end to the schism.

The year 2009 witnessed a clear Arab reaction against the Israeli offensive on GS (27/12/2008–18/1/2009). The Arab League demonstrated its inability to deal with the challenges it faces; it failed to unify the Arabs around the Palestinian issue or stand against the Israeli war machine which destroyed GS and killed its people for over three weeks.

Although the Arab League succeeded in convening an emergency meeting for the Arab Foreign Ministers, in late 2008, to discuss the Israeli aggression on the GS, the meeting which lasted over 10 hours failed to adopt a clear stand pushing to end the offensive. The final statement only condemned the aggression and called for an immediate end to the assault, while urging the continued relief efforts. The paradox appeared when the Arab League called on the Security Council to hold an emergency session to issue a resolution that urges Israel to stop its aggression, while the League meeting, which only welcomed a Qatari-Syrian-Yemeni proposal to hold an Arab emergency summit, failed to adopt one.¹

1. Gaza Emergency Summit

There was no Arab consensus regarding holding an urgent summit, while Qatar insisted that the summit be held regardless of who attends. It succeeded in mobilizing a number of Arab countries supportive for the summit, but had not achieved the necessary quorum to convene. Both Egypt and KSA rejected to attend the summit. They considered that holding a consultative meeting on the margins of the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit in Kuwait on 19/1/2009 would be sufficient. In response, the Qatari Prince Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani said that it was “shameful” to discuss Gaza “on the margins” of Kuwait’s Arab Economic Summit.²

Gaza Emergency Summit convened on 16/1/2009 in the presence of 13 Arab countries: Qatar, Syria, Sudan, Algeria, Lebanon, Comoros, Mauritania, Iraq, Libya, Oman, Morocco, Somalia and Djibouti.³ On the other hand, the fact that some countries apologized for not attending the summit after they have essentially agreed, reflected the size of pressures exercised on these countries to discourage them from participating in the summit. In fact, the number of participants oscillated back and forth, where it reached a majority of two-thirds more than once yet backed down. For example, Yemen was among the countries that called for holding an emergency summit yet it did not attend it when it convened. Besides, the Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas did not attend the meeting and justified his absence by the lack of an Israeli permit to leave the WB. In this context, the Qatari Prime Minister Hamad Bin Jassim Al-Thani declared that his contacts with the Palestinians continued until late time of 15/1/2009 to ensure the presence of the Palestinian President. Yet, the latter declined because of pressures which, as he told the Qatari PM, would have led to his slaughter from vein to vein. Moreover,

the Qatari PM reiterated that his country had to send a plane to make sure that the Palestinian factions attend the summit, after it was sure that the PA would not participate, thus emphasizing the importance of the Palestinian representation in the summit. Worth of mention here is that the Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad attended the Gaza Emergency Summit.

It is important to analyze this summit and its consequences, on the Arab and Palestinian levels, since it is clear that the game of axes took its shape in the Arab official institutions including the Arab League. Whereas, the alignment of the moderate countries with the PA, did not prevent the “refusal front” countries from supporting the resistance movements which participated in this summit. In this context, the participation of Khalid Mish'al, head of Hamas political bureau, who delivered the speech of the Palestinian delegation allowed Hamas to achieve a temporary and limited breakthrough within the Arab regimes.

The limited participation in the Gaza Emergency Summit impacted its outcome where it only defined the points that would be displayed in the Economic Summit of Kuwait. The summit “condemned Israel for its savage aggression” on GS and blamed it for “committing aggression, war crimes and genocide.” Besides, it also stressed the “opening of all crossings for persons and humanitarian relief materials” and “the need for lifting the illegitimate blockade against the Strip of Gaza.” The Gaza Emergency Summit meanwhile decided to establish a reconstruction fund for Gaza and appreciated the contribution of the State of Qatar to the fund (\$250 million). The summit called upon the Arab states to suspend the Arab Peace Initiative and “cease all forms of normalization including the reconsideration of diplomatic and economic relations.”⁴

2. Kuwait Economic Summit

The conflicts between the moderation and refusal front axes prevailed on the Arab political scene prior to the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit in Kuwait, which was planned in advance on 19–20/1/2009. Nonetheless, the steadfastness of the Palestinian resistance, its outstanding performance facing the aggression, the failure of Israel in achieving a decisive victory, and the weak Arab stand overshadowed the conference and the outcome of the summit. Thus, it failed to come out with strong political decisions. The Arab Peace Initiative had the greatest share of the political differences, on one hand there were the suggestions of Gaza Emergency Summit to suspend the Arab Peace Initiative and cease all

forms of normalization with Israel. On the other hand, the Arab foreign ministers presented to the Kuwait Economic Summit recommendations to proceed with the Arab Peace Initiative without mentioning severing the relations with Israel. The participants to the conference agreed at the end on the wording of a final statement which does not refer to controversial issues, thus it demanded a stable ceasefire, holding Israel responsible for the war crimes in GS and emphasizing support for the GS and its reconstruction yet without agreement on the entity authorized to receive the funds.⁵

Facing this situation, it was likely that the Kuwait Economic Summit fall short of the minimal aspirations and demands of the Arab street. Nonetheless, the Saudi and Kuwait initiative to donate a billion dollars and \$250 million respectively for the reconstruction of GS was a positive indicator of a relative sympathy with the suffering of the Gazans. On the other hand, there was no clear mechanism of how to deliver the funds to GS which has been besieged since June 2007. There was, also, no clear program for how the resolutions of the Arab League, concerning lifting the siege and reconstruction of GS, will be implemented. These facts assured once again the extent of weakness of the Arab League.

3. The Doha Summit

The Arab League had extensive activities in the first three months of 2009, where three official summits were convened. The 21st Arab Summit which convened in Doha, on 30/3/2009, was the most prominent. The level of representation was high; where 17 Arab leaders participated in addition to different levels of representation for other countries. Whereas a delegation headed by the Minister of Legal Affairs and Parliamentary Councils, Dr. Mufid Shehab, represented Egypt.

Apparently, the inter-Arab differences had a significant impact on the Arab Summit where Arab reconciliatory meetings dominated a notable part of the summit. It was reduced to one day after it was scheduled for two. The participants concluded their meeting with an emphasis on the importance of Arab solidarity and the need for dialogue to resolve inter-Arab disagreements.

The final communiqué of the Arab Summit was very similar to that issued at the end of the Kuwait Economic Summit held in January 2009. It emphasized the need to call for ending the siege of Gaza and the need to consolidate the cease-fire while giving tribute to the resistance of the Palestinian people. In addition, it condemned

strongly the Israeli aggression on Gaza while “stressing the need to identify a specific timetable for Israel to fulfill its obligation towards the peace process.” The Doha Summit further stressed the Arab League adherence to the Arab Peace Initiative while the Arab leaders demanded “halting Israel’s unilateral policies and its procedures to dictate a *fait accompli* on the ground” including the cessation of settlement activities, dismantling the Separation Wall and not tampering with the status of Jerusalem.

On the other hand, the Second Summit of South American-Arab Countries (ASPA) was held in Doha on 31/3/2009 with the participation of 22 Arab countries and other 11 countries from Latin America. The summit called in its final statement for the establishment of the independent Palestinian State with full sovereignty living in peace side by side with the State of Israel. The statement condemned the Israeli military operations in GS and called for the reopening of all crossings between GS and Israel to allow the access of essential goods and services.⁶

On the political level, the Arab League continued to interact with the events of GS and their subsequent repercussions on the international level. In this sense, the Arab League Secretary-General ‘Amr Musa stressed the importance of the UN reports concerning GS as they refer to war crimes committed by Israel in the GS. In addition, Musa realized that there was a major breach of the International Law on the Israeli side.⁷ In the same context, the Arab League delegated two commissions to GS: the first was legally competent to examine the crimes Israel committed in the GS and the other to study the way the joint Arab work establishments would reconstruct GS.⁸

Regarding the Palestinian reconciliation, there was no action on the side of the Arab League in 2009 to end the conflict between Hamas and Fatah Movements. The League and its Secretary-General continued to support the Egyptian efforts to achieve the reconciliation. In this context, Secretary-General Musa met Khalid Mish‘al, in February 2009 in Damascus, where they discussed the inter-Palestinian reconciliation via Egyptian mediation, besides the pacification between Israel and GS and the prisoner exchange deal.

Concerning the peace settlement process and the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, the Arab League continued to embrace the peace process as a strategic option as well as displaying the Arab Peace Initiative as a basis

for resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict. In this respect, ‘Amr Musa reiterated that the Arab Peace Initiative was still valid, and there was consensus in the Kuwait Economic Summit that the initiative was on the table, yet this situation would not last for long.⁹ In addition, the Arab League was persistent in its support for the PA which refused to return to negotiations in the light of the Israeli settlement construction campaign in the WB including East Jerusalem. However, the Arab rejection declined after 11 months, when the USA eased the pressure off Israel and started to pressure the Palestinian side. On 3/3/2010, the Arab League’s Arab Peace Initiative follow-up committee has agreed on Wednesday to back one last round of indirect Palestinian-Israeli talks. However, the Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Mu‘allem objected to this statement and said that the endorsement by Arab ministers of indirect talks was outside their mandate. Al-Mu‘allem said, “The decision to go to indirect or direct talks is a Palestinian decision,” and added that the PA had to bear the responsibility for such a decision. Yet, the committee’s statement was later approved by the Arab Foreign Ministers.

Concerning the Syrian conflict with the members of the Initiative follow-up committee, Musa said that there was a consensus that the US did not play the expected role. He added that the disagreement was as follows; Syria said the negotiations were to no avail and hence there was no need for a new round, while the majority believed that since Abu Mazin had received certain assurances, then the US should be given another chance, yet with reservations about the Israeli stance.¹⁰

The Arab League summit which convened in Sert in Libya, on 27–28/3/2010, continued in adopting the Arab Peace Initiative and the peace settlement track. This was reassured in the Extraordinary Arab Summit held also in Sert, on 10/10/2010. The Arab countries supported the Palestinian decision to stop peace talks with Israel, unless the latter halts the activities of building settlements in the WB. The Arab leaders discussed other alternatives in case negotiations fail, these were brokered by the US which failed to persuade the Israelis to renew the moratorium. In general, the flaccid Arab regimes are incapable of pushing up the peace process to attain the minimum Palestinian and Arab demands.

Second: The Stances and Roles of Some Key Countries

1. Egypt

During 2009, Egypt has been the major player regarding the Palestinian issue. In addition to the links of Arabism, Islam, history and geography, Egypt realizes that its national security depends on the security of its east side—its gate to Asia and to the east of the Arab and Muslim worlds. The Egyptian government has acquired a status that enables it to play a strong role in the Palestinian arena. It is the leading Arab country, the center of demographic weight, its ruling regime has links with all the Palestinian forces, and has relations with Israel and the US, which make it one of the Arab moderate countries. This role was particularly clear during the Israeli war on GS, in the efforts for achieving Palestinian national reconciliation and in tackling the siege of GS particularly the Rafah crossing issue.

a. The Stance on the Israeli Aggression on GS

The position of Egypt regarding the Israeli offensive on GS faced internal and external criticism. It was accused of “being an accomplice with Israel” in its efforts to topple the Hamas government in GS, suppressing the demonstrations that support the resistance and GS siege lift, closing the Rafah crossing and preventing the aid to enter. In addition its political performance was not up to the demands and expectations of Arab public and many Arab governments. However, the ruling regime in Egypt clarified that it was acting in accordance with its regional and Arab position, its obligations towards the peace settlement and its relations on the Palestinian, Israeli, Arab and international levels.

The Egyptian official leadership, including President Husni Mubarak, the Foreign Minister Ahmad Abu al-Ghait and the People’s Assembly, condemned the Israeli attack on the GS and directly blamed Israel for the casualties caused by the aggression. However, the Egyptian position directly criticized Hamas for the collapse of the truce with Israel on 19/12/2008.

In an earlier time, Egypt was accused of coordinating the attack on GS with the Israelis, or at least of its prior knowledge of the attack, in the light of the Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni’s visit to Cairo on 25/12/2008, two days prior to the aggression. Livni threatened in a joint press conference with the Egyptian Foreign Minister, following her meeting with President Mubarak, “We cannot tolerate a

situation in which Hamas continues to target Israel, Israel's citizens, and this situation is going to be changed." She added, "Hamas needs to understand that our desire to live in peace doesn't mean we will allow the [rocket] fire to continue—Israel will do everything necessary to protect its citizens." On the other hand, the "London-based newspaper *Al-Quds al-Arabi* reported that Egypt has informed Israel that it would not object to a limited Israeli military operation in the Gaza Strip."¹¹ This urged Hamas spokesperson Fawzi Barhoum to declare that the Israeli aggression came following a "green light from regional parties" while the raids came after Livni's visit to Cairo and her threats to topple Hamas. Barhoum said that leaders from Hamas received calls from Cairo assuring them that 27/12/2008 (the day the aggression started) would be a calm day in GS.¹² In its turn, the Egyptian leadership denied the accusations, and its Foreign Minister declared that President Mubarak had noticed indicators for an Israeli aggression on GS and thus called Livni to warn her against launching the attack. He added that the night Livni arrived, 60 rockets were launched from the GS aiming, according to Abu al-Ghait, at delivering "a specific message that imply the failure of the Egyptian effort."¹³

The Egyptian authorities contacted the Israelis to end the aggression on GS and "take quick, effective steps in this sense since Egypt could not stand idly and watch what was going on in Gaza."¹⁴

On the other hand, the Egyptian leadership accused Hamas of bearing a part of the responsibility and causing the Israeli aggression on GS. In a televised speech broadcast on 30/12/2008, President Mubarak blamed Hamas and said that "he had warned Hamas leaders that ending the six-month truce with Israel would bring new Israeli attacks."¹⁵ In his turn, Abu al-Ghait pointed in an interview with *al-Arabiyya* TV to warning Hamas against the disastrous consequences of its military operations adding that the Israeli crimes in Gaza "were caused by Hamas's unjustified, military operations it launched against Israel."¹⁶ The ruling National Democratic Party declared in a statement that Hamas leadership "was responsible for the course of events in Gaza" and that "Hamas has tackled the situation with a spirit of adventure and irresponsibility without taking the consequences into account."¹⁷ The Shura Council Speaker Safwat Al-Sharif stated that Hamas was driven by external objectives and it did help the Palestinian cause.¹⁸ Further, Mustafa al-Faqi, head of the Egyptian Parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee and one of the top leaders in the ruling party, told the Egyptian Satellite Channel that "Hamas must be

held accountable for its behavior” which, according to al-Faqi, has prompted the region to this bloody situation.¹⁹ Striking were the efforts of Abu al-Ghait to link Hamas performance and its stands to the Iranian agenda in the region implying that Hamas was an Iranian card. In this respect, Abu al-Ghait said that during the last events of GS there was a distribution of roles among Iran, Hamas and Hizbullah. Iran wants to benefit from the regional conflicts and clashes and use its cards to face the western pressure.²⁰

Hamas leadership generally tried to avoid going into debate and exchange of accusations with the Egyptian government since Hamas is aware of Egypt’s role and its influence, besides being the only Arab gateway for the besieged GS. Hamas mainly demanded Egypt to open Rafah crossing so that it would not be an accomplice to the siege and to play an effective role in facing the aggression and defending the Palestinians and supporting them. Lifting the siege and opening the crossings became a part of Hamas’s essential demands to end the war, in addition to the full withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the GS. Hamas leaders reiterated this demand where Khalid Mish’al addressed the Egyptian President demanding the opening of the crossing and considering it a historical responsibility and trust. He stressed that Hamas is not a threat to Egypt, it is rather the Israelis and the Americans, whereas the Gazans and Palestinians would defend Egypt.²¹

Despite the wide criticism campaign against the Egyptian leadership, the latter insisted on the continued closure of the Rafah crossing during the war and opening it only under specific and exceptional conditions. It declared, through President Mubarak, that opening the crossing in the absence of the Ramallah-based PA and observers from the EU would constitute a violation to the Agreement on Movement and Access of 2005. It will cause Egypt, also, to deal with two Palestinian authorities, thus dedicating the state of schism between the WB and GS.²² In addition, opening the crossing according to Abu al-Ghait, might lead to the immigration of around 200–300 thousand Palestinians to Egypt as a result of the war and that is what Israel want.²³

These justifications were not persuasive to those who recalled how the Egyptian role was not just to supply the Gazans with their needs, but rather to protect and defend them, and even work on liberating the rest of Palestine. They considered that the least thing Egypt could do is to open the crossing in order to support the steadfast people who are facing the most vicious massacres while the siege

deprives them from their essential needs. Therefore, the angry demonstrations in the Arab and Islamic world and many other countries that were condemning the Israeli offensive, also condemned the Egyptian official attitude towards Rafah crossing while many protests headed towards the Egyptian embassies to express their anger.

The Egyptian authority found itself in an embarrassing situation which led it to soften its criticism of Hamas and to show more sympathetic stand. It opened Rafah crossing partially especially for humanitarian cases, and opened the Egyptian hospitals to receive the casualties of the Israeli offensive.²⁴ Fawzi Barhoum criticized this partial, “selective” behavior in opening the crossing saying that “originally, Egypt is supposed to open the crossing for the alive not for the dead where our wounded return in Egyptian coffins.”²⁵ It seemed that allowing some relief convoys to pass while preventing others was not clear for many, except as an effort to absorb part of the popular anger while the siege continues. However, President Mubarak declared that opening the crossing was in coordination with Israel in the presence of Israeli surveillance cameras since the GS was, officially, still under the Israeli occupation. Further, as Mubarak mentioned, Egypt was trying to avoid any clashing with the Israelis so they would not claim that we were allowing the smuggling of weapons, ammunitions or prohibited materials.²⁶ Abu al-Ghait was more explicit when he said that those criticizing Egypt and demanding that it opens the crossing were actually trying to drag it into a confrontation with Israel.²⁷

The Egyptian public sympathy with the GS against the Israeli offensive was wide, while Hamas and the resistance forces received substantial support for facing the Israeli offensive. Dozens of Egyptian cities witnessed large demonstrations where hundreds of Egyptians took to the streets protesting against their government’s stances while demanding the opening of Rafah crossing and stopping gas export to Israel besides expelling the Israeli ambassador from Cairo. The Muslim Brotherhood played a prominent role in the demonstrations supported by members from “Kefaya,” Labor Party, “Socialist Revolutionaries” and Nasserites among others. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt called on the Arab and Muslim people to stand against what it called “complicity of most Arab and Muslim governments and regimes with the enemy in its assault against the Palestinian resistance.”²⁸ In his turn, the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, Muhammad Mahdi ‘Akef denounced the accusations targeting Hamas movement as “a conspiracy

on the Jihad against the Zionists.”²⁹ The opposing Labor Party condemned the Egyptian official role in the war while its Secretary-General Magdi Hussein said that “Gamal Mubarak was rising to power on the corpses of thousands of Palestinians.” Labor Party and “Socialist Revolutionaries” accused the Egyptian authorities of supporting the Israeli occupation.³⁰ Abd al-Jalil Mustafa, a senior member and the coordinator of Kefaya, declared that “Egypt’s image has hit rock bottom because of the regime’s support for Israel.”³¹

The Egyptian authorities tried to restrain the demonstrations and carried out an arrest campaign against the opposition forces, thus apprehending around 700 detainees in its third day mostly from the Muslim Brotherhood. This campaign was continued all during the war, whereas the Ministry of Awqaf warned preachers against arousing the feelings of worshippers or pushing them to raise the banners of Jihad; in addition, it prohibited cursing Arab rulers in mosques.³²

Egypt was politically active to stop the Israeli offensive while President Mubarak presented an initiative on 6/1/2009 in a joint press conference with the French President Nicolas Sarkozy, including the following points:

1. Both sides the Israelis and the Palestinian factions should accept an immediate cease-fire for a specified period, to allow the reopening of safe corridors for relief assistance to the sector citizens and to let Egypt continue to move to reach a comprehensive and definitive ceasefire.
2. Egypt’s call on both sides the Israeli and the Palestinian for an urgent meeting in order to reach the arrangements and guarantees to non-recurrence of the present escalation and to address its causes, including securing the border, ensuring the reopening of the crossings and the lifting of the blockade and its readiness to discuss these issues with the Palestinian and Israeli sides as well as the European Union and the rest of the parties of the International Quartet.
3. Egypt’s renewed its invitation to the National Authority and all Palestinian factions to cooperate with the Egyptian efforts to achieve Palestinian reconciliation as the main requirement for overcoming the challenges facing their people and their case at the present dangerous situation and in the future.³³

Hamis showed reservations on the Egyptian initiative because it does not clearly demand the complete Israeli withdrawal from GS after the end of the aggression. Neither does it explicitly mention lifting the siege or opening the crossings including Rafah, while it links that to requirements that might protract the siege even further. In addition, it links the Palestinian representation with the leadership



in Ramallah, without directly dealing with the party which actually rules GS and defends it. Moreover, the initiative does not include any condemnation for the Israeli aggression and does not distinguish between the aggressor and the victim.³⁴

The Egyptian authorities called on Hamas to keep low the ceiling of its demands considering that “Hamas was standing on a high horse and it should get off it... as it was wrong in its betting” stressing that Hamas leaders “should lower the ceiling of their conditions to achieve settlement before it was too late.”³⁵ Moreover, the Egyptian authorities called on Hamas to “read the initiative well and not rush into a decision which it would regret” since “if it rejected the initiative, it would miss an opportunity which might never be repeated.”³⁶ However, the Israeli unilateral ceasefire and the withdrawal of its troops from GS, without any conditions, showed that Hamas imposed better conditions than those presented in the Egyptian initiative and that Hamas’s performance was better than the Egyptian expectations.

Egypt refused to participate in the Gaza Emergency Summit which Qatar called for on 16/1/2009. It stated that the issue could be discussed on the sidelines of the Kuwait Economic Summit on 19–20/1/2009.³⁷ A few sources pointed to the role of Egypt in discouraging some Arab countries from participating in the conference, including Morocco and Libya.³⁸ Thus, only 13 Arab countries out of 22 attended the conference after some absentees have confirmed their attendance earlier. According to Abu al-Ghait in an interview with Orbit Satellite Television on 27/1/2009, Egypt “has caused the failure of the Doha Summit because it was impossible to link the joint Arab work to the consent of Comoros and Somalia,” and because in case this summit was held as an Arab summit with full quorum then “it would have caused harm to the joint Arab work.”³⁹

b. The Stance on the Palestinian Reconciliation

Egypt had the most prominent Arab role in the mediation between Fatah and Hamas and the other Palestinian factions where it exerted much pressure during the first ten months of 2009 to achieve national reconciliation. Egypt hosted six rounds of dialogue between Fatah and Hamas and the other factions, in addition to receiving many delegations from these factions. It sent also delegations to WB, GS and Syria in efforts to achieve a solution acceptable to all parties.

The first chapter of this report discussed the Palestinian reconciliation and the efforts done to achieve it. To avoid repetition, we add the following points for more clarity:

1. To achieve national reconciliation, Egypt exerted exceptional efforts in 2009 as compared to the previous years, especially with the positive Palestinian atmosphere that prevailed after the Israeli war on GS. Egypt might have been and is still aware of the dangers of the Palestinian divisions and their negative impact on its national security. It is aware also of the burden resulting from not arranging the conditions in GS in a way which is acceptable on the international and Arab levels. Whereas, closing Rafah crossing (whether willingly or against its will) could be interpreted as a participation in besieging the Palestinian people, which is distasteful on the popular level and burdensome on the official level.

The huge effort was interpreted in the communication with all Palestinian parties, and the efforts to find an environment fit for dialogue. Egypt also followed-up the organization of six rounds of dialogue, the efforts to melt away the points of disagreement and it suggested formulas that are acceptable to all parties.

2. To push towards Palestinian reconciliation, Egypt has benefited from its regional and Arab weight and position, its links with all the Palestinian parties, its leading role in the Arab and Islamic world and its relations with Israel and America. However, the Israeli and American will to prevent a reconciliation that might lead to the participation of Hamas in a national unity government, which does not recognize the Quartet's conditions or leads to hardening the Palestinian stand regarding the peace settlement process, was a disincentive that was not easy to overcome. It is also possible that the desire of the Egyptian leadership to maintain strong relations with the US, on which it relies for passing presidency to Gamal Mubarak, led to taking that into consideration in the reconciliation process.
3. The Egyptian regime has signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1978, in addition to maintaining good relations with the US and supporting a peace settlement process, thus it was practically in the same boat with President Mahmud 'Abbas and the leadership of the PLO and the Ramallah-based PA. On the other hand, Hamas model of resistance and non-recognition of Israel contradicts with the Egyptian general policy. For this reason, the Egyptian regime was not at an equal distance from the different parties in the management of the conflict and bringing the Palestinians sides together.

4. The regime in Egypt has its problems and calculations, especially in the light of the concerns about the increasing power of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Egyptian society and being the major and most organized opposition group. Since Hamas is an extension to the Muslim Brotherhood trying to present a Muslim model, its control of the GS was not welcomed by the Egyptian leadership, let alone its victory in the elections and forming the Palestinian cabinet. This affected the relations between Egypt and GS and the continuation of the siege—by closing the Rafah crossing and building the Steel Wall—which was interpreted by Hamas as an attempt to derail its model or abort it. Thus, it became difficult for the Egyptian government to establish a strong relation with Hamas or influence it in the process of decision making.
5. Egypt put forward its reconciliation paper in October 2009. This paper was considered one of the most comprehensive reconciliation papers as it addressed in details the issues related to elections, security, the PLO and the Palestinian government among others. Fatah has signed the paper, whereas Hamas refused to sign unless after taking its remarks into account. This refusal outraged the Egyptian side which refused to open the way for discussion or accept any amendments or explanatory appendices. Hence, Egypt accused Hamas of stalling the reconciliation, whereas Hamas believed that its reservations should be taken into consideration to ensure the success of the reconciliation process.

The Egyptian authorities believed that the changes demanded by Hamas were “not basic and not substantive at all” and accused Hamas of evading the reconciliation and the obligations it has made upon signing the document.⁴⁰ The Egyptian official media harshly attacked Hamas and its leadership including what *Algomhuria* Chief Editor Muhammad ‘Ali Ibrahim, has written under the title “No New Paper, O Hamas Fighters... O Musa (Abu Marzouk)... Watch your Tongue, Egypt Does not Compromise or Maneuver” where he attacked Hamas and accused it of crippling the reconciliation efforts in compliance with regional pressures from Qatar, Iran and Syria.⁴¹

c. The Stance on Lifting the Siege and Opening the Crossings

The official Egyptian stand, regarding lifting the siege of GS and opening the crossings, was founded on the following considerations and criteria:⁴²

1. GS was still under the siege and Israel was still responsible for it. Hence, the Rafah crossing should be opened according to some criteria which do not suggest the end of the occupation, and such that Israel does not elude its obligations.
2. The Palestinian legitimate government is the one in Ramallah whereas the dismissed cabinet in GS is illegal. Egypt refuses to deal with the dismissed cabinet led by Hamas so that it does not consecrate the Palestinian schism.
3. Egypt respects the Agreement on Movement and Access signed in 2005 between the PA and Israel. It believes that the PA staff appointed by the government in Ramallah should manage the Rafah crossing, while the EU observers should return so that Egypt could open the crossing normally and on a daily basis.
4. Egypt would open the Rafah crossing for humanitarian situations from time to time to alleviate the suffering of the Gazans and in coordination with the Israeli side.
5. The Rafah crossing is only meant for the passage of people, while the Egyptian Karam Abu Salem crossing is for goods and trade exchange.
6. The Egyptian authorities have officially curbed the smuggling tunnels on its borders with the GS albeit with less pressure regarding goods and foods.

The Egyptian stance was not convincing for many who saw that closing of Rafah crossing, the only Arab outlet for the GS, as an Egyptian participation in the siege and a way to put pressure on Hamas and topple it. In addition, Egypt seemed to be giving the American and Israeli considerations the priority over its national and Arab obligations, while it is unacceptable to allow the Israeli side to control the borders between two Arab countries or regions especially after its withdrawal. Moreover, in the case people were under siege, occupation and destruction, international humanitarian law which is above all regional or local treaties and arrangements calls for lifting the siege and helping the afflicted people. Kenneth Roth, the executive director of Human Rights Watch (HRW), has accused the Egyptian authorities of playing a “decisive role” in the Gaza siege. He said that Egypt’s claims about the need for EU observers to open the crossing were not enough an excuse to starve the Gazans.⁴³

For Egypt, opening Rafah crossing without restrictions or without agreement with the Americans and Israelis (and with the Ramallah-based Authority) would

cause a political crisis with these parties and maybe an Israeli military intervention. Whereas this is what Egypt was trying to avoid, especially that it officially adopts the peace project and it has official relations with Israel as well as close ties with the US. For this reason, Egypt sought to stabilize an equation which shows the official consensus with these parties regarding the Rafah crossing, yet at the same time it turned a blind eye to the smuggling of foodstuffs and commodities through the tunnels. However, this policy was put under further pressure during 2009, which led the Egyptian authorities towards the adoption of more stringent methods to curb the tunnels smuggling.

The Egyptian authorities have adopted a policy of closing the Rafah crossing since Hamas seized control of the GS in mid June 2007, and it used to open it exceptionally and in separate periods of time to allow the passage of people including patients and students. Statistics of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights show that the crossing was closed 683 days out of 719 days between 12/6/2007 and 31/5/2009, i.e., it was opened for only 36 days. In addition, a study conducted by the Centre shows that the Rafah crossing was opened 33 days out of 301 days in the first 11 months of 2009.⁴⁴ This shows how tight the siege on GS is, even on the Egyptian side, regardless of the reasons which have caused it.

The same Egyptian policy was pursued towards the activists and relief convoys wishing to enter GS via the Rafah crossing. Preventing or delaying access through the crossing was based on different pretexts and reasons. This was applicable to Arab and European deputies and parliamentarians, in addition to relief, medical, human rights and political delegations.⁴⁵ One of the incidents which received wide focus in the media was the procedures imposed on the “Artery of Life 3” humanitarian convoy in late 2009 and early 2010. The convoy which was led by the British MP George Galloway included 465 personalities from 17 Arab, Muslim and European countries and consisted of 250 trucks and ambulances with humanitarian relief such as food and medical equipment. The Egyptian authorities forced the convoy to return from the port of Aqaba and change its direction from Nuweiba Egyptian port which is close to the Red Sea to al-Arish port on the Mediterranean via Latakia port in Syria causing delay for several days and substantial damage. In addition, there was disagreement between the convoy members and the Egyptian security forces in al-Arish regarding allowing trucks into GS. When the Egyptian authorities finally allowed the access of only

158 trucks, a wide campaign of protest and public anger erupted especially in Turkey which had a major participation in the convoy. At the end, the convoy was allowed into GS where it was welcomed on the official and public levels.⁴⁶ George Galloway accused the Egyptian authorities of being a part of the siege,⁴⁷ whereas Abu al-Ghait accused the convoy members of trying to impose their will on Egypt.⁴⁸

The year 2009 has witnessed more serious and professional Egyptian efforts to curb the tunnels used by the Palestinians as urgent and necessary alternatives to get their needs. In fact, there are no accurate statistics specifying the number of tunnels, yet estimates show that there are between 500 and 1000 tunnels connected to the Egyptian side of the borders with Gaza. Estimates show also that the Gazans depend on the tunnels by 50–60% to meet their needs. The Egyptian procedures facing the tunnels could be summarized in the following:

1. Destroying a big number of tunnels.
2. Pumping wastewater or spraying toxic gases into the tunnels.
3. Installation of electronic sensors and sonar equipments to detect the tunnels.
4. Establishing advanced guard towers on the borders with GS.
5. Construction of the steel wall.

According to published reports, security apparatuses have increased the campaign against “smuggling” via the tunnels, in addition to searching all means of transportation in the region, deploying military checkpoints on the roads leading to the Suez Canal and contacting the eminent personalities in Rafah and tribe chiefs in Sinai to ensure the prevention of smuggling, especially weapons.⁴⁹ During the first eight months in 2009, some sources mentioned that the Egyptian authorities have seized and destroyed around 350 tunnels.⁵⁰ The Independent Commission for Human Rights has counted 62 deaths for different reasons,⁵¹ in addition to other 64 deaths counted by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights in the period between February and November 2009 killed due to the collapse of tunnels, suffocation, electrocution and gas leaks.⁵² On the other hand, the Arab Organization for Human Rights (AOHR), which is based in England, said that “Egyptian security forces used deadly force in the ‘war’ against tunnel workers between GS and Egypt and carried out premeditated killing of people underground, and away from the eyes of the world.” According to AOHR, 54 death cases were documented as having died due to the “inhaling a poisonous gas sprayed by the Egyptian security forces inside the tunnels.” It further added that “security forces used explosives, pumped wastewater and caused artificial vibrations to destroy the tunnels over the heads of

the people working inside them, without a warning.” The Egyptian practices, as AOHR stressed, were carried out under a complete supervision and support from the US, Israel and most of the EU countries.⁵³

Palestinian sources mentioned in early April 2010 that the introduction of commodities and goods through tunnels has declined as a result of the Israeli raids and the strict Egyptian procedures. In addition, around 80% of tunnels have been destroyed according to the same sources.⁵⁴

On another level, the American Congress allocated \$50 million to “secure” the Egyptian borders with GS.⁵⁵ Additionally, there was news about American efforts, with the participation of American military experts, to support the Egyptian war on tunnels. It included, for example the installation of American systems for the detection of tunnels under the supervision of the American Air Force.⁵⁶

On 9/12/2009, *Haaretz* daily revealed—citing Egyptian sources—that the Egyptian authorities have started the construction of a massive steel wall along its borders with the GS. It will go 20 to 30 meters into the ground in an effort to eliminate the smuggling tunnels.⁵⁷ The Egyptian authorities denied the construction of the wall, and then confirmed it yet in the context of talking about architectural constructions on the border with GS. After that it justified the wall as a necessity for national security and sovereignty besides securing the borders.

The steel wall issue became a major concern in the media in that period while its construction was confirmed through reports and eye witnesses. There were widespread protests against the steel wall where it was called the “Wall of Shame” or the “Low Dam,” in addition to religious edicts issued by many scholars, including Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, declaring that the construction of the wall was *haram* or forbidden as it exacerbates the Palestinians’ suffering and isolation which they live. However, the Egyptian official media retaliated with a vigorous campaign taking advantage of many edicts issued by al-Azhar scholars claiming that the wall was an Egyptian issue and the construction is taking place inside the Egyptian territories.

Data about the steel wall mentioned that it would be 10 kilometers long out of a 13.5 kilometers long border between Egypt and the GS. Three kilometers on the sea side would be excluded as no tunnel digging could be done because of the soft soil and the possibility of collapse of the tunnels. Data also mentioned that the wall is composed of steel sheets 18 meters high, 50 centimeters wide and 5 centimeters

thick. Besides, the sheets would end with tapered head with holes which would be probably used in pumping water to cause the collapse of the tunnels. In addition, 5.4 kilometers were completed till the end of 2009 while the US funds and supports the construction of the wall.⁵⁸

Thus, 2009 ended with tension in the relation between the Egyptian government and Hamas, with increased Egyptian measures in fighting the tunnels, which is according to many Gazans a participation in besieging them.

2. Jordan

The issue of Palestine is a priority in the Jordanian political affairs since the historical relations, demographic composition and geographic boundaries of Jordan, besides its direct and fast influence on the Palestinian events make the Palestinian issue a central and vital issue for Jordan.

Jordan has defined its general political track through the disengagement from the WB, signing the peace treaty with Israel, the adoption of the peace settlement project and the Arab Peace Initiative, its support for the PA under the leadership of Mahmud 'Abbas in addition to the rejection of naturalization and the idea of the alternative homeland. Generally speaking, this track represents belonging to the so-called "moderate" Arab front.

There was a wide public reaction in Jordan against the Israeli offensive on GS, while the official authorities turned a blind eye to the huge public demonstrations that swept different cities. They expressed sympathy with the besieged afflicted Strip and with Hamas and the Palestinian resistance against the Israeli attacks. According to the Ministry of Interior, there were around 624 protests and solidarity marches with GS, 84 of them were organized by the Muslim Brotherhood. The Prime Minister Nader al-Thahabi warned before the parliament that there might be a reconsideration of the relations with Israel. He reiterated that Jordan would not tolerate the serious deterioration of the humanitarian situation in GS, nor would it overlook this threat which affects the security of this region and its stability. Moreover, 88 out of 110 MPs have signed a memorandum demanding the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador and recalling the Jordanian ambassador from Tel Aviv.⁵⁹

The popular movement in Jordan had an essential role in supporting the Gazans in addition to the efforts of charities and trade unions, especially the Jordan Engineers Association (JEA), in fund-raising and relief campaigns besides the reconstruction of GS.

The Jordanian leadership focused in 2009 on three major concerns related to the Palestinian issue:

First: Emphasis on the re-launch of serious, effective negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel to resolve the conflict, once and for all, on the basis of a two-state solution.⁶⁰ This was emphasized many times by the Jordanian King ‘Abdullah II who said that the Arab Peace Initiative guarantees the future of Israel as a partner with one third of the world (the Islamic World) which has not recognized it yet. King ‘Abdullah further emphasized the importance of the American role in prompting the peace settlement process while warning that the Israeli initiatives to establish economic peace would not solve the core problem associated with the Palestinian cause.⁶¹ In his meeting with Netanyahu, the Jordanian King said that “Israel would not enjoy security and stability unless the Palestinians achieve their right to statehood and to living in peace and security.”⁶² King ‘Abdullah also said in an interview with *Haartez* in the 15th memory of signing the peace treaty with Israel, that the relationship with Israel “is getting colder” and the status quo cannot be perpetuated since we are “sliding back into the darkness.”⁶³

The Jordanian Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh, declared that Jordan would not negotiate on the behalf of the Palestinian side, yet it should be a major party in the final status issues especially those related to Jerusalem, water, borders and security.⁶⁴ This is a statement that reflects the overlap between the Palestinian and Jordanian situations and the need for coordination between the two sides on common issues.

Second: Refusing naturalization and the idea of an alternative homeland: This is one of the most sensitive issues in Jordan since there are more than 3.2 million citizens of Palestinian origin living in Jordan as well as many Palestinians with temporary Jordanian passports. The Jordanian King has emphasized that “there is nothing in our dictionary called alternative homeland, and Jordan is stronger than accepting any impositions.”⁶⁵ He also said that “our stance on the issue of the refugees would not change and our adherence to the right of return and compensation is nonnegotiable.”⁶⁶

A debate in the Knesset on a draft which suggests Jordan as an alternative homeland for the Palestinians caused resentment on the official and popular levels. The National Democratic Bloc in the Jordanian Parliament issued a statement which reflected the general mood of the ruling regime in Jordan. It considered this

debate a violation of the peace treaty with Jordan and demanded the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador from Amman, as well as the withdrawal of the Jordanian ambassador from Tel Aviv.⁶⁷

Jordan has faced accusations from legal and humanitarian organizations on the basis of stripping Jordanians from Palestinian origin of their nationality. Human Rights Watch mentioned in its report that official statistics of the Follow-up and Inspection Department showed that 2,732 Jordanians had had their nationality withdrawn based on the disengagement instructions between 2004 and 2008.⁶⁸ On the other hand, the Jordanian government denied any systematic withdrawals of nationality from Jordanian citizens, and it reiterated that what was happening was a correction of status in the light of the decision to sever Jordan's legal and administrative ties with the WB.⁶⁹ In his turn, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Nayef Al Qadi declared that Jordan was standing against a project trying to resolve the Palestinian refugees issue at the expense of Jordan. The Minister refused to use the term "citizenship withdrawal" stressing that what was happening was "a correction of status" aiming at urging those who have a "family reunification" permit, issued from the Israeli occupation authorities, to renew it and safe keep it as a precaution against the Israeli plans.⁷⁰

Amid fears of possible American-Israeli scenarios to impose a solution for the issue of the Palestinian refugees at the expense of Jordan, news disclosed that a meeting was convened between senior Jordanian officials. They formed a kind of "crisis unit" to study these possibilities and put Jordanian plans to face them.⁷¹

Third: Focus on Jerusalem and protest against its Judaization. In 2009, Jerusalem was selected as a Capital for Arab Culture where Jordan held many events on this occasion.

King 'Abdullah II emphasized the need that Israel stops its procedures and excavations in Jerusalem which aim at changing the identity of the city and emptying it of its Arab population.⁷² Later, he warned that these Israeli procedures not only threaten the relations between Jordan and Israel, but also could trigger severe reactions in the Muslim world and cause the collapse of the efforts to launch peace negotiations.⁷³ King 'Abdullah also warned that Jerusalem is "a red line" and that any Israeli tampering with its identity would lead to "disastrous consequences on regional security and stability"; he further warned the Israelis about "playing

with fire.”⁷⁴ The Jordanian Foreign Ministry summoned the Israeli ambassador in Amman, on 4/10/2009, and handed him a letter of protest against the repeated Israeli violations in Jerusalem, *al-Aqsa* besides the holy Islamic and Christian sites there.⁷⁵

The Jordanian government maintained its official relations with the Ramallah-based PA, and it continued to provide security services to train Palestinian police members. However, it declined to host Fatah movements’ Sixth Conference in Amman. The Jordanian authorities, probably, did not want to provide a venue for an intra-Fatah conflict, knowing that Jordan has been the central meeting place for the preparatory committee of the Sixth Conference. When Secretary of Fatah’s Central Committee Faruq Qaddumi launched his statements against President Mahmud ‘Abbas from Amman, the Minister of State for Media Affairs and Communications Nabil Sharif expressed his sorrow for that. In addition, the Jordanian government asked Qaddumi not to launch any political or media statements hostile to President ‘Abbas from its territories.⁷⁶

Despite its sympathy with the Gazans, Jordan did not deviate from the Arab official stand which refused to recognize the Hamas-led government in the GS. While the relations between the Jordanian government and Hamas witnessed a significant improvement in 2008, these relations did not change much in 2009. On the other hand, the Israeli war on GS in addition to Khalid Mish‘al’s visit to Jordan to attend his father’s funeral showed the level of sympathy and popularity that Hamas enjoys in Jordan.

The dismissal of Muhammad al-Thahabi, director of the General Intelligence Department, and of his brother Nader al-Thahabi from premiership, was considered as negative indicator to the relation with Hamas or at least a freezing of the possibilities of its development to higher levels. In the same context, the appointment of Nayef al-Qadi as Interior Minister in the new government might have been a similar indicator as al-Qadi supervised in 1999 the deportation of Hamas leaders from Jordan to Qatar.⁷⁷ Al-Qadi implied the return to the state of “cold and frozen” relations, when he said that “Jordan deals with Hamas movement as a political organization on the Palestinian territories; the movement enjoys a Jordanian respect just like the other factions which Jordan treats normally, far from any claims or rights for Hamas on the Jordanian political arena”;⁷⁸ he also denied any talks or contact with Hamas, adding in an interview with *Asharq al-Awsat* daily

that “we do not interfere with the affairs of Hamas or allow Hamas to interfere with ours, and we deal with Hamas through the Palestinian legitimacy.”⁷⁹

Drawing the relation between the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan and Hamas was one of the issues which arouse the attention of those concerned, especially after Hamas held its internal elections and chose its leadership. There were discussions concerning the controversial relation between the two sides and how each side affects the process of decision making of the other. The discussions included, also, the effect of that relation on the Jordanian arena and political work in Jordan, in addition to the effect on the work for the Palestinian cause. Authorities did not hide their desire to separate the two sides administratively and organizationally. However, the difficulty of this separation appears in the background of Hamas emergence, the historical development in the relation between the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan and Hamas, in addition to the great number of Jordanians from Palestinian origin and the centrality of the Palestinian cause to the Jordanians. In fact, the events in Palestine directly impact the situation in Jordan which has the longest borders with the occupied Palestine.

In late 2009, King ‘Abdullah II dissolved the parliament and formed a new government which was supposed to prepare for fair elections. There were many factors behind this step including, as some analysts mentioned, the desire to accommodate the Muslim Brotherhood and Palestinian-origin citizens in the Jordanian political system in a better and broader way.

3. Syria

Syria still plays a crucial role in the Palestinian issue due to the ongoing state of hostility with Israel, the continued Israeli occupation of the Syria Golan Heights and the Syrian support to the Palestinian resistance forces. Thus, Syria maintained, in 2009, its closeness to the refusal camp which is supportive to the resistance versus the Arab moderate camp. Syria is not expected to change its stand in the foreseeable future but rather it is expected to strengthen its position in the refusal camp, especially in the absence of any indicators of a breakthrough in the negotiations between Syria and Israel. Thus, it will benefit from its support for the resistance in Lebanon and Palestine and its proximity to Iran and Turkey—the two regional powers which are currently playing an important role in the Palestinian issue.

a. The Stance on the Offensive on GS

Syria had a notable position regarding the Israeli offensive on GS, where it was among the first Arab countries to condemn the aggression. It declared its consent to attend the Arab Emergency Summit which Qatar called for. The summit was to discuss the offensive on GS and was held on 16/1/2009 under the title “Gaza Emergency Summit.” During the summit, Syria expressed its explicit support for the resistance in GS, thus refusing to accuse the resistance of any responsibility for the aggression. In this context, President Bashar Assad said in his speech before the summit that “the claims of Israel and those who support it about the Palestinian responsibility for what happened are sheer lies.” Assad also said that the Arab Peace Initiative was “as good as dead” declaring the indefinite halt of indirect peace talks between Syria and Israel which have started in 2008.⁸⁰

In addition, Damascus witnessed an active diplomatic movement as part of the efforts to stop the aggression. President Assad received his French counterpart, Nicolas Sarkozy, in Damascus and presented him with a joint Syrian-Turkish initiative for a ceasefire in GS that Hamas had already approved.⁸¹ In the same context, Assad later received the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon concurrently with the Israeli announcement of its unilateral ceasefire.⁸²

b. Supporting the Palestinian Resistance

The Syrian stand during the Israeli offensive on GS showed that Damascus continued to hold on to its stance of supporting the Palestinian resistance. In confirmation of Syria’s stance towards Hamas, Assad said in an interview with the German daily *Der Spiegel* on 19/1/2009 that “Hamas has the trust of the people, and anyone who wishes to destroy it must destroy an entire people”; he also called on the international community to start a dialogue with Hamas and said, “Whether you call it terrorism or resistance, and whether you like Hamas or not, it is a political entity that no one can ignore.”⁸³

In many occasions, Assad reiterated Syria’s support for the resistance where he emphasized that “resisting the occupation is a patriotic duty, supporting the resistance is our moral and legal obligation, and assisting it is our pride and honor.” He warned that the failure of negotiations in restoration of rights means the resort to resistance as an alternative solution.⁸⁴ In the opening of the Fifth General

Conference of Arab Parties held in Damascus, President Assad “concluded [his opening speech] by saying ‘We now began building a new Middle East with resistance as its essence,’ affirming that resistance in its cultural, military and other meanings is the essence of Syria’s polices today and the past, and it will remain the essence of existence in the future.”⁸⁵

c. Supporting the Palestinian Reconciliation

Although Syria appeared in 2009 to be closer to Hamas and other resistance forces, especially upon the offensive on GS, it maintained its relation with the Ramallah-based PA under Mahmud ‘Abbas albeit with frequent tension. It tried to stand at an equal distance from both sides regarding the Palestinian reconciliation. The Palestinian reconciliation was always present on the Syrian diplomatic agenda through the meetings of Assad and his Foreign Minister with the Arab and foreign leaders and diplomats. Assad highlighted this issue in an interview with *al-Khaleej* newspaper concerning the Arab reconciliation on 9/3/2009 where he said that “in every meeting we discuss the Palestinian issue and we do not want to support one side against the other.”⁸⁶

During his meeting with President Mahmud ‘Abbas in Damascus in May 2009, the Syrian President stressed the need “to resolve disputes and achieve the Palestinian reconciliation.”⁸⁷ There was news that Syria showed readiness to contribute to the efforts of internal reconciliation and achieving it. Sources cited Assad offering ‘Abbas to host a dialogue which brings together delegations from Fatah and Hamas in Damascus. He offered also to call the other Palestinian factions for a comprehensive dialogue, which should end with signing the reconciliation agreement with Syrian guarantees. It would be followed by an official signature in Cairo, after Hamas refused to sign the Egyptian reconciliation paper.⁸⁸

Foreign Minister Walid al-Mou‘alem frequently reiterated his country’s keenness on the success of the Palestinian internal dialogue saying that “we are making every possible effort through our contacts with the Palestinian factions for a successful Palestinian dialogue in Cairo.”⁸⁹ Following the reconciliation between Damascus on one hand and Cairo and Riyadh on the other hand, al-Mou‘alem said that the enhancement of Arab solidarity is necessary for the Palestinian dialogue. He hoped also to succeed in finding common ground for all the issues that cause division among the Palestinians.⁹⁰

In November and October 2010, Damascus hosted two rounds of talks between Fatah and Hamas. These talks narrowed down the differences on several issues, except for the part of security issues.

d. Syria's Stances on Israel

Despite the activity on the Syrian-Israeli negotiations track in 2008, that was represented in the indirect talks in Ankara under the auspices of Turkey. This course witnessed a setback with the beginning of the Israeli offensive on GS, in late 2008 and early 2009, where Syria announced the indefinite halt of negotiations in protest against the aggression.

On the other hand, the formation of a right-wing government in Israel led by Benjamin Netanyahu has led to further decline in the negotiations process. President Assad referred to this by saying that the failure of the peace process till now “has clearly shown that the main impediment to peace is Israel” while ruling out the possibility of achieving peace in the region in the presence of what he described as “the most radical governments in the history of Israel.”⁹¹ Tension between the two sides escalated with the advent of February 2010 till it created fear of an exhaustive war in the region. Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak warned that “the absence of an agreement with Syria could lead to an armed conflict that might develop into a full-scale war.” This triggered harsh reaction from Syria where President Assad considered that “all events showed that Israel was pushing the region towards war,” while the Foreign Minister Walid al-Mou‘alem warned that the Israeli cities would not be safe in case of a war on Syria.⁹²

At the same time, Syria did not totally close the door on negotiations to achieve a “just peace settlement” since it has implied this settlement many times. President Assad expressed that Syria could conduct direct peace negotiations with Israel if the US acts as a mediator. This stand appeared in an interview with the Japanese *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper, published on 11/3/2009, where “Assad hailed the new US administration, adding that he wanted to hold negotiations for regional peace, and also insisted on the return of the Golan Heights.”⁹³ Syria has always stressed this position, and it confirmed this also after the Knesset has decided to hold a referendum before implementing any agreement that provides for the withdrawal of Israel from East Jerusalem and Golan. Syria further rejected returning to indirect negotiations with Israel through Turkish mediation unless Israel withdraws from the occupied Golan.⁹⁴

4. Lebanon

a. The Palestinian Situation in Lebanon

Developments of the Palestinian Arena in Lebanon

There were many organizational and security developments in the Palestinian arena in Lebanon. On the organizational level, Fatah Sixth General Congress in Bethlehem led to major changes in Fatah and the representation of the PLO in Lebanon. Brigadier-General Sultan Abu al-‘Aynayn left his position, as Fatah secretary in Lebanon, after his election to the Central Committee of Fatah, while Fathi Abu al-‘Ardat replaced him.⁹⁵ As for ‘Abbas Zaki, he left his position as a representative of the PLO in Lebanon, on 24/10/2009, after he was replaced by ‘Abdullah ‘Abdullah.⁹⁶

On the security level, the most important development was the assassination of Major-General Kamal Midhat, deputy representative of the PLO in Lebanon, on 23/3/2009. The roadside bomb which targeted his motorcade near the Mieh Mieh refugee camp, south of Lebanon, killed Midhat and three of his guards and injured three others. The assassination aroused wide Lebanese and Palestinian condemnation especially that Midhat was responsible for the reconciliation and pacification file in the refugee camps, and he was well-known for his good relations with all parties in Fatah and the other factions.⁹⁷

The other prominent security development was in Haret Hreik in the southern suburb of Beirut, on 26/12/2009, when an explosion near a Hamas center led to the death of two of its members and left several others wounded.⁹⁸ There were no clear reasons for the explosion which triggered many narratives, while Hamas vowed to cooperate with the Lebanese investigation and to identify the perpetrators. However, some parties found in the incident an opportunity to raise the issue of the Palestinian presence outside the refugee camps. The General Secretariat of March 14 alliance expressed its “deep concern” over this explosion and that it has occurred in this region outside the camps.⁹⁹ Deputy Speaker of Parliament Farid Makari said that the explosion showed that Lebanon “would continue to pay the price for settling accounts as long as there are security zones in addition to the presence of Lebanese and Palestinian illegitimate weapons.”¹⁰⁰

The Lebanese-Palestinian Relations

On the Palestinian side, Mahmud ‘Abbas’s visit to Lebanon, on 7–8/12/2009, was the most prominent event in the Lebanese-Palestinian relations. However, this visit did not bring any change to the situation of Palestinians in Lebanon, especially that the issue of the Palestinian refugee camps was not on the agenda for that visit and although ‘Abbas’ talks with the Lebanese officials tackled granting the Palestinians in Lebanon their civil and social rights.

In early 2010, Head of the political bureau of Hamas Khalid Mish‘al visited Lebanon, and met with the Lebanese President Michel Suleiman and the Prime Minister Sa‘ad Hariri. He discussed with them the Palestinian reconciliation, the civil rights of the Palestinian refugee and the Palestinian weapons in Lebanon.¹⁰¹

As for the Lebanese, the approach of their government and different parties and forces to the Palestinian issue was for the most part within one of three contexts: security, naturalization and civil and social rights.

In the security context, a report published by the International Crisis Group (ICG) titled “Nurturing Instability: Lebanon’s Palestinian Refugee Camps” mentioned that the 2008/2009 “war [in GS] also revived domestic debate on various aspects of the Palestinian presence. Some March 14 leaders, citing the rocket firings, renewed calls to disarm Palestinians outside the camps.”¹⁰²

In this context, Samir Geagea, the leader of the Lebanese Forces, declared that “what was happening in Gaza was the outcome of a strategy in which the Arabs had no opinion,” adding that “it was time to collect the Palestinian weapons outside the camps even if it became necessary to call governmental forces.”¹⁰³

On the other hand, the MP of the Lebanese Social Democratic Party (*al-Kataeb*), Sami Gemayel, considered in his speech before the Lebanese community in Montreal that the essential problem facing Lebanon is “the issue of Lebanese sovereignty which is being violated by the armed Palestinians on the Lebanese territory and who impose other sovereignty in some regions and camps.”¹⁰⁴

The issue of naturalization was always present in the Lebanese arena. The Maronite Patriarch Mar Nasrallah Boutros Sfeir reiterated his rejection for naturalization, and suggested as a solution for those “who came and settled here” that “international governments consider their situation and find them another place, if not their original homeland, to settle in.”¹⁰⁵

It is striking that the issue of naturalization was the main determinant of any movement's approach to the Palestinian issue and all its developments, in addition to using it in internal political debates. In this context, the report published by the ICG noted that the "Aounist movement [Free Patriotic Movement (FPM)], depicting the war as an Israeli effort to deal advocates of the right of return a deadly blow, seized the opportunity to raise alarm bells about prospects for *tawtin* [naturalization]."¹⁰⁶

On another hand, the leader of the FPM Michel 'Aoun, who heads the Change and Reform parliamentary bloc, commented on the delay in forming the cabinet after the parliamentary elections in mid 2009 saying that the "naturalization problem is the external dimension of the cabinet-formation crisis and it is not a scarecrow as some sides claim."¹⁰⁷

On the sidelines of the debate regarding the reconstruction of Nahr al-Bared camp, MP Ibrahim Kan'aan of the Change and Reform bloc stated that the funding allocated for the reconstruction and which amounts to \$300 million "changes the camp from a refugee camp to a place for permanent residence."¹⁰⁸ In the following day, Minister Elias Skaff warned during a dinner held by the FPM that "the day the Lebanese accept naturalization, all Middle East Palestinians would be transferred to our country."¹⁰⁹

Regarding the humanitarian rights of the Palestinians in Lebanon, the period following the formation of the new government, and after the parliamentary elections, has witnessed recurrent talks about the need to give the Palestinian refugees their rights and alleviate their suffering. MP Bahia Hariri confirmed that "humanitarian rights of Palestinians in Lebanon would see light with the government of Sa'ad Hariri."¹¹⁰

The leader of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), Walid Jumblatt, suggested the establishment of a Ministry of State for Palestinian Affairs in the new government. This ministry would take more care of the human and social issues of the Palestinians, thus keeping these issues apart from the political debates.¹¹¹ However, he withdrew his suggestion after it became an issue of debate.¹¹²

On 13/1/2010, PSP held a conference to support civil rights of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. It aimed at "converging and unifying perspectives between different Lebanese parties regarding the Palestinian's right to decent livelihood." The conference which was attended by most Lebanese and Palestinian political

factions, recommended taking the issue of Palestinian civil rights out of political debate and dealing with it as a national issue. It called also for the amendment of Labor and Property Laws in a way that gives the Palestinians their rights in these domains.¹¹³

Hizbullah's new political document which was approved in its eighth conference called Lebanese authorities to "establish the Lebanese-Palestinian relations on firm and legal basis," adding that the success of this mission is achieved through "the Lebanese-Palestinian direct dialogue... and giving the Palestinians their civil and social rights... while adhering to refusing naturalization."¹¹⁴

In August 2010, the Lebanese parliament passed a law, which granted the Palestinians partial rights to work and social security and within certain terms. Observers considered the bill as a step forward in improving Palestinians' status, but fell far short of attaining their full civil rights.

The Reconstruction of Nahr al-Bared Camp

The groundbreaking ceremony for the reconstruction of Nahr al-Bared camp was held, on 9/3/2009, under the auspices of then Prime Minister Fu'ad al-Sanyurah. He was represented by Minister of Information Tarek Mitri who reiterated the Lebanese government's commitment to "the reconstruction and development in al-Bared and its neighborhood."¹¹⁵

However, reconstruction works soon stopped under the impact of debate between the government on one hand and Change and Reform bloc headed by Michel 'Aoun on the other hand. The issue under debate was that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) charged a company to remove the debris of Nahr al-Bared Camp. On 5/2/2009, this company found ancient ruins in the old part of the camp. The Directorate General of Antiquities recommended stopping work on the site, yet the Lebanese government decided to "rebury the ruins according to the international standards."¹¹⁶ This led 'Aoun to file an official contestation with the *Shura* Council against the government's decision. On 18/7/2009, the *Shura* Council decided that the government's decision of reburying be stopped, while granting a two month moratorium, during which both sides would present their legal views.¹¹⁷

The FPM suggested that the Lebanese government appropriates the lands in the new camp and start reconstruction there, while transforming the ruins in the

old camp into a tourist site.¹¹⁸ The FPM declared that its stance is in line with its commitment to “defend the right of the Lebanese to preserve their history, heritage and culture that are represented in the ancient ruins as well as in other elements,” and also its “full commitment to the civil and social rights of the Palestinians.”¹¹⁹ However, the *Shura* Council later cancelled the contestation filed by the Change and Reform bloc for failing to present, in due time, the necessary evidence that proves the presence of ancient ruins.¹²⁰ Thus, the reconstruction of Nahr al-Bared camp was resumed on 26/10/2009.¹²¹

b. Lebanon and Israel

In 2009, there were verbal escalation and war threats between Israel and Hizbullah. Many threats against Lebanon and Hizbullah were issued by the political and military officials in Israel, notably Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defense Minister Ehud Barak and Chief of Staff Gabi Ashkenazi.

In the consultations period prior to the formation of the government in Lebanon, Netanyahu warned, “If Hizbullah joins the Lebanese government, then the Lebanese government is accepting responsibility for Hizbullah’s actions, including its actions against Israel.”¹²² On the other hand, Barak stated that Israel was closely watching the growing power of Hizbullah warning that in case the fine balance was disturbed, [Israel] would study the possibility of taking measures. He stressing that Israel will not accept a separation between the responsibility of Hizbullah and the responsibility of the Lebanese government.¹²³ Ashkenazi in his turn warned that in case Hizbullah performed an attack in revenge for the assassination of its top military commander ‘Imad Mughniyyah, Israel would retaliate strongly.¹²⁴

In response to these threats, Hizbullah’s Secretary-General Hasan Nasrullah warned that “the Israeli army will be destroyed in any future war” adding that “the equations that used to apply have now changed” as now it is “the southern suburb [of Beirut] for Tel Aviv and not Beirut for Tel Aviv.”¹²⁵ Nasrullah also stressed that the resistance has become capable of targeting any place in Israel and facing its soldiers with tens of thousands of fighters, instead of thousands as in July war 2006. He also vowed to bring new surprises in any war which Israel might launch.¹²⁶

On another hand, security war erupted between the two sides after the Israeli Intelligence activity in Lebanon received painful blows. This was following the success of the Lebanese security forces in uncovering and dismantling many spy

networks which were working for Israel, notably the network working under the retired security officer Adib al-‘Alam.

In addition to the aforementioned, there was Hizbullah’s success in obtaining detailed intelligence information about the activity of the Israeli army and the Northern Command. According to *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper which mentioned on 11/12/2009 that it has got a secret internal bulletin of Hizbullah that proves the extent to which their intelligence has succeeded in infiltrating the Israeli army, and proves that the party has considerable sources of information.¹²⁷

5. KSA and Gulf Countries

The KSA safeguarded its position in the moderate front and it refused to participate in the Gaza Emergency Summit which Qatar has called for to support Gaza. The Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Sa‘ud al-Faisal commented on that summit saying that Palestinian divisions were enough rather than Arab division. This is not the first time this happens.¹²⁸ However, KSA pledged \$1 billion for reconstruction in GS. At the same time, Saudi Arabia continued to be the essential Arab financial supporter for the PA where it paid the sum it has vowed.

The KSA refused, as al-Faisal declared, the withdrawal of the Arab Peace Initiative stressing that “it was still valid, yet the Israeli side was procrastinating because it did not want peace but rather gaining more territories,” and that the initiative “allowed the Arabs to penetrate Israel’s supporters around the world.”¹²⁹

On the other hand, the KSA refused to make any concessions in its stand against Israel to meet Washington’s wishes. Following his meeting with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, al-Faisal said:

Incrementalism and a step-by-step approach has not and—we believe—will not achieve peace. Temporary security, confidence-building measures will also not bring peace. What is required is a comprehensive approach that defines the final outcome at the outset and launches into negotiations over final status issues: borders, Jerusalem, water, refugees and security.¹³⁰

Regarding the position on the Palestinian reconciliation, the KSA affirmed its keenness about achieving it. In this context, the Saudi King ‘Abdullah Bin ‘Abd al-‘Aziz said:

The Palestine issue is currently on the verge of a dark tunnel... He also called on Palestinian leaders and individuals to beware inter-difference and hatred. The monarch frankly declared that Palestinian rivals were over

the recent history detrimental to the Palestinian issue more than the Israeli enemy. Since you are divided and warring each other, it would be impossible for the entire world community to create an independent Palestinian state.¹³¹

The year 2009 witnessed advanced Qatari stands regarding the Palestinian issue. Doha rushed to call for the Gaza Emergency Summit to discuss the Israeli aggression, where it pledged \$250 million for the reconstruction of GS.¹³² In addition, Qatar announced freezing the political and economic relations with Israel and decided to close down Israel Trade Representation Office in Doha.¹³³

Regarding the Palestinian reconciliation, the Prince of Qatar Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani reiterated his country's support for the Palestinian national unity. He called at the same time to avoid intervention in the Palestinian internal issues in a way that favors one side over the other. He also stressed that the non-recognition of the outcome of the Palestinian parliamentary elections (which were held in 2006) by many countries, and punishing the Gazans by besieging them have caused many countries to lose their credibility when talking about democracy.¹³⁴ On another hand, the Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hamad Bin Jassim Al Thani criticized the stands of some Arab countries which, according to him, had endeavored to inflame the Palestinian disputes particularly after Hamas won the majority in the parliamentary elections, calling at the same time to avoid "bias to one Palestinian side at the expense of another."¹³⁵

On another level, Abu Dhabi hosted on 3/2/2009 a meeting for nine Arab countries, where it launched a process to achieve an Arab consensus that puts a limit to "non-Arab" interventions and supports the Arab Peace Initiative and the PA. Foreign Minister Sheikh 'Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan said after the meeting that "we convene because we want to solidify Arab unity and mobilize support for the Arab Peace Initiative besides giving more support for the PA under Mahmud 'Abbas."¹³⁶ The United Arab Emirates (UAE) aid for the PA continued where the UAE transferred on 22/11/2009 a sum of €100 million (around \$149.2 million) to PA's treasury account.¹³⁷ In addition, the UAE donated, at the end of 2009, \$2.5 million to support the budget of the UNRWA,¹³⁸ besides the humanitarian relief convoys to GS which continued throughout the year.

Kuwait hosted the Arab Economic Summit on 19/1/2009, where the offensive on GS topped its agenda. The Prince of Kuwait Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah stressed during the summit the importance of unity and discarding divisions between

the Palestinians. He called all Palestinian leaderships for unity, solidarity and cooperation. He also pledged \$34 million to fund the UNRWA.¹³⁹ The Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Muhammad al-Sabah announced in the Gaza Reconstruction Conference, which was held in Sharm el-Sheikh on 2/3/2009, his country's commitment to pay \$200 million for the PA over the next five years.¹⁴⁰

In Bahrain, the Bahraini King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa received Khalid Mish'al twice in one year. On 16/3/2009, he received Mish'al with the Acting Speaker of the PLC Doctor. Ahmad Bahr, where he stressed the need to overcome internal disagreements and achieve national reconciliation. He also called for lifting the siege of GS and reconstructing it.¹⁴¹ He again received Mish'al on 5/1/2010 during the latter's Arab tour.¹⁴² On the other hand, the Bahraini Parliament passed on 27/10/2009 a bill banning all forms of dealing with Israel.¹⁴³

Third: Developments of Normalization

The Israeli attempts to penetrate the Arab official regimes and public have continued over the past decades. Normalization according to Israel is a strategic issue that is related to its presence in the Arab region. Indeed, Israel has succeeded since its existence in establishing secret political relations with some Arab leaders, while it penetrated public refusal for normalization with official peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt. In addition, the chances for normalization have increased and broadened after the beginning of direct talks between Israel and the PLO and the signing of Oslo Accords. These developments allowed Israel to have open relations with some Arab countries.

The Israeli offensive on GS, in the winter of 2008/2009, caused thousands of Palestinian victims in addition to massive destruction. Despite all that, some Arab countries continued to normalize relations with Israel regardless of the wide public refusal for such relations.

1. Egypt

The issue of Egyptian natural gas exported to Israel continued to be the main debate in Egypt since it is one of the major forms of normalization with Israel. Egypt's Supreme Administrative Court headed by Judge Ibrahim al-Saghir, overruled the decision of the State Council and decided that gas export should

continue. It must be noted that the State Council has annulled previously the decision of the Egyptian government to export gas to Israel.

In this context, *Haaretz* newspaper revealed that the Egyptian-Israeli company, East Mediterranean Gas (EMG), has signed in July 2009 a new contract to export huge quantities of natural gas to Israel for 17 years, while giving the Israeli side the right to renew the contract for five additional years. The Egyptian Ministry of Petroleum justified this issue on the basis that the contract is a commercial agreement between the company and its Israeli partners.

Haaretz clarified that EMG, which is owned by the Israeli businessman Yossi Meiman in partnership with the Egyptian government, has agreed with the Israeli Dorad Energy Ltd., which operates in the field of electricity generation, to export 12.5 billion cubic meters of natural gas in a new deal worth \$2.1–2.5 billion.

In the framework of the bilateral agreement between the two companies, EMG has to supply 750 million cubic meters (MCM) of natural gas to Dorad in return for \$125–150 million per year.¹⁴⁴

The Hebrew economic newspaper *Calcalist* revealed that the contract between EMG and Israeli companies to supply them with natural gas was worth \$10 billion. Power Expert Lior Gutman noted that the sum includes the contracts which the Israeli companies have signed with EMG. They are eight contracts concluded with eight parties in Israel: Israel Electric Corporation (IEC), Neshar Israel Cement Enterprises Ltd., Dorad Energy Ltd., Ashdod Energy Ltd., Ramat Negev Energy Ltd., Solad Energy Ltd., Haifa Chemicals Ltd. and Makhteshim Agan Industries Ltd.¹⁴⁵

The official documents about the prices of Egyptian natural gas exported to Israel in 2008–2009, which was published in *al-Masry al-Youm* newspaper in September 2009, showed that the Egyptian General Petroleum Authority exported 30 billion cubic feet of gas to Israel through the marine pipeline, thus achieving around \$90 million returns with average \$2.97 for every one million British thermal unit (Btu). According to the newspaper, the price of gas sold to Israel is less than that sold to the local market by three cents for high energy consuming industries which get the gas for \$3.¹⁴⁶

As for the economic proceeds of this deal for Israel, IEC declared that the supplies of the Egyptian gas would allow the company to achieve its goal of producing 40% of electricity in Israel from natural gas,¹⁴⁷ which is beneficial for Israel.

In 2009, there was a significant development in the value of trade between Egypt and Israel. The Israeli imports from Egypt increased from \$132.4 million in 2008 to \$270.9 million in 2009 whereas the Israeli exports to Egypt declined by 3.6% where it dropped from \$139 million in 2008 to \$134 million in 2009. Thus, trade between Egypt and Israel increased by 49%.¹⁴⁸

Normalization was not only limited to the economic domain. Israel which failed to penetrate the cultural arena during the last three decades, since the peace treaty with Egypt, succeeded to exploit the efforts of the Egyptian Minister of Culture Farouk Hosny who was trying to win the position of Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Thus, it criticized him for his former statement that said that he was ready to burn Israeli books if any were found in The New Library of Alexandria. The requirements of winning the position besides the Israeli criticism campaign urged Hosny to express his “sorrow” for his former statement. It even made the Ministry of Culture announce Egypt’s will to sign a contract with a European publication house to translate the works of two Israeli authors, Amos Oz and David Grossman, into Arabic.¹⁴⁹

On another hand, Hala Mustafa, the editor-in-chief of *al-Democratiyyah* magazine published by Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies (ACPSS), hosted the Israeli ambassador in Egypt, thus triggering controversy in the Egyptian media. Hala defended herself saying that there is no rule in Al-Ahram which prevents hosting any diplomat. She added that hosting the Israeli ambassador in Al-Ahram Center was not a precedent as Al-Ahram Weekly Chairman of the Board ‘Abd al-Mun‘eim Sa‘id had hosted the former Israeli ambassador in the presence of Ibrahim Nafie‘, the former editor-in-chief of the board.¹⁵⁰

2. Jordan

The Jordanian Interior Minister Nayef al-Qadi made an exception for those bearing the Israeli nationality from getting a visa—from the Jordanian embassy in Tel Aviv—to enter Jordan. His justification was that he wanted to avoid any obstacle that might prevent Palestinians of 1948 occupied Palestine from practicing religious rituals in the *Hajj* and *‘Umrah* season. It is known that Jordan requires citizens from many Arab countries such as Sudan, Egypt and Morocco among others to get a visa to enter its territories. In return, the Israeli authorities did not

treat Jordanian citizens the same way and continued to require them to get a visa for entry into Israel.¹⁵¹ Later, Jordanian Prime Minister Nader al-Thahabi denied this and declared that “Israeli citizens are required to get a visa just like the Israeli side requires the Jordanian citizens to get one.” Jordanian parties and unions launched a campaign against the exemption decision and considered it an “exaggeration in the normalization with the enemy.”¹⁵²

A report published by Aljazeera.net showed that the Israeli ambassador in Amman, Yaakov Rosen, organized a gala dinner which was attended by a number of Jordanian businessmen and media persons. Hamza Mansur, who heads the Higher Executive Committee for Defending the Homeland and Confronting Normalization, noted that the supporters for normalization are only “a bunch of mercenaries and opportunists who are looking for a role.” Mansur added that the Jordanian official authorities “are seeking a price from Washington through a bunch of mercenaries and traders.”

However, Tariq al-Hamidi, an activist in the domain of normalization with Israel and one of the dinner attendees, refused the claims that “normalizers” were only a minority. He said that he himself knew tens of Jordanians who participate in workshops that are held throughout the year in Israel. He added also that they amount to 12 annual workshops in the domains of water, environment and others, where between 20 and 25 Jordanians participate in each.¹⁵³

On 8/9/2009, a delegation of 12 Jordanian journalists representing different official and private media corporations conducted an official visit to Jerusalem. The visit, which was the first of its kind, aimed at examining the efforts to foster the Islamic and Christian holy sites, according to the statement of the Jordanian government spokesperson Nabil al-Sharif. The Anti-Normalization Committee of the Jordanian Professional Associations (JPA) threatened that it would black list the members of the press delegation who visited Jerusalem on the basis of normalization with Israel.¹⁵⁴ On the other hand, the head of the Jordanian Press Association, ‘Abdul Wahhab Zughailat, noted that any visits conducted by Jordanian journalists to occupied Palestine do not fall within the scope of normalization. He added that the visit was an official and a professional work to emphasize the Arabism of Jerusalem, and to clarify the Hashemite and Jordanian role in the reconstruction of the Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem and preserving them.¹⁵⁵

On the economic level, trade between Israel and Jordan continued during 2009, while its value deteriorated by 23.6% which amounts to \$93.2 million. In a report by the Jordanian Ministry of Agriculture, the Agriculture Minister Sa'id al-Masri revealed that Jordan has imported around three thousand tons of fruits and vegetables from Israel in the first nine months of 2009, in addition to other 60 kinds of other agricultural products.¹⁵⁶

In a communiqué circulated by the Jordan Customs in January 2010, a new list of products of Israeli origin benefited from exemption or tariff duty reduction under the Protocol annexed to the Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation between Israel and Jordan, which has entered its sixth phase on 1/1/2010. The Jordan Customs annexed a list of around 2,500 goods that are exempted from customs fees and taxes. Moreover, Jordan Customs reduced tariff duties and other fees by 50% on a number of items and materials of Israeli origin, when they are exported directly to Jordan.¹⁵⁷

On the security level, the Jordanian and Israeli military forces conducted military training to face earthquakes, with the participation of two to three brigades from each side.¹⁵⁸

3. Other Arab Countries

The Israeli billionaire Lev Leviev opened four stores specialized in selling luxury clothing in Dubai, which arouse angry reactions especially that he is one of the biggest supporters of settlers in the WB. Reports affirmed that Leviev has signed a contract with a French company specialized in this domain, and the company in its turn signed a contract with one of the UAE businessmen. Reports noted that opening the four stores is only the first step towards opening stores in the biggest and most luxurious malls in Dubai.¹⁵⁹ In the same context, *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper mentioned, in 23/2/2009, that many bearers of the Israeli passports enter Dubai including businessmen, diamond and food dealers. On the other hand, the UAE authorities refused to grant the Israeli tennis player Shahar Pe'er a visa to participate in Barclays Dubai Tennis Championships which was held in February 2009. Some observers referred this refusal to the Israeli offensive on GS prior to championship.¹⁶⁰

On the other hand, Israel participated in the meeting of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) which was held in October 2009 in Abu Dhabi. The UAE Foreign Ministry declared that the Israeli participation was decided by IRENA which supervised the meeting, adding that the UAE role was limited to hosting the meetings without having any responsibility for the participants. The UAE further stressed that such Israeli participation does not mean any change in its policy towards Tel Aviv or any indicator for normalization with the Hebrew state.¹⁶¹

On another level, Iraq abolished the condition of boycotting Israel for participation in the annual Baghdad International Fair upon the requirement of the EU so that European countries could participate.¹⁶² The Iraqi MP Nouredine al-Heyali confirmed that the Israelis are present in every region and the aim is to divide Iraq according to preset plans. *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper mentioned that Iraq has sealed a deal with the USA to supply Iraq with Israeli modern military equipment adding that the deal is worth \$49 million and it includes control towers, sensors and surveillance cameras and it comes in the context of Israeli-American cooperation agreements.¹⁶³

In Bahrain, the Council of Representatives passed a law, on 27/10/2009, which criminalizes and prevents dealing with Israel. The Bahraini government expressed reservations on the law while the Undersecretary of Regional and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Affairs, Hamad al-Amer, said that “the bill constitutes interference by the legislative body in executive matters, regarding defining foreign policies and affairs which is entrusted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.”

In the details of the law, the Council of Representative agreed that whoever violates the provisions of the draft law banning dealing with Israel is imprisoned for three to 10 years. In addition to imprisonment, the offender could be charged with a fine that does not exceed 10 thousand Bahraini Dinars (\$26.6 thousand). If the crime is committed by a moral entity, the penalty set forth in the preceding paragraph is applied to the offender and any accomplices who belong to that entity.¹⁶⁴

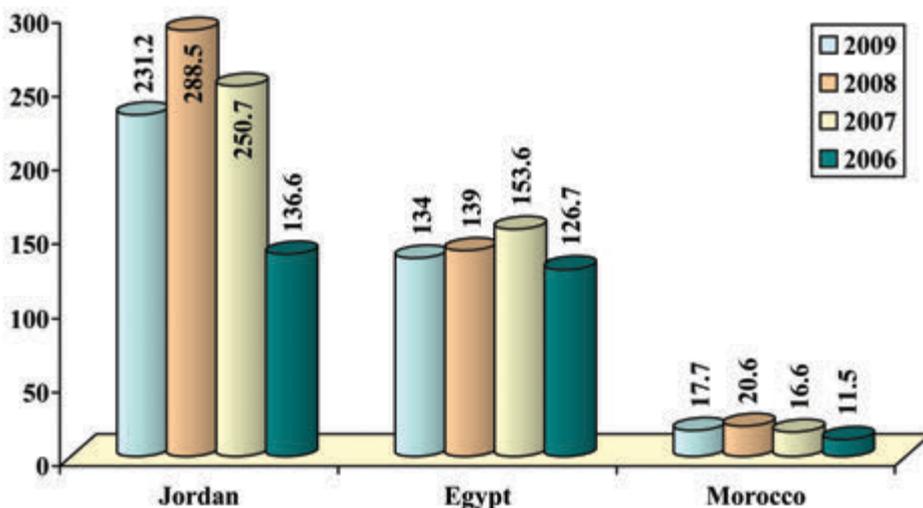
In Morocco, more than 200 Moroccan Jews, including Israelis, participated in an international meeting for the Jews from Fez origins. The Moroccan newspaper *Aljarida Aloula* mentioned that the meeting, which convened under the slogan “the Jews of Fez in Fez,” aimed at informing the Jewish generations about the Jewish cultural heritage of the city.¹⁶⁵

Apparently, some Israeli attempts to circumvent the laws which prevent normalization and dealing with Israel have succeeded. This was emphasized by David Arzi, Corporate Vice President of Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), who was earlier the chairman of The Israel Export and International Cooperation Institute, where he said in an interview with *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper that he did not think that there is something called boycotting Israel. He also affirmed that Israeli exports are everywhere except in countries which Israelis are not allowed to deal with, i.e., Iran, Syria and Lebanon. Arzi mentioned also that he has visited many Arab countries including the Gulf. It is not possible to know the extent of exaggeration in what he said. By and large, the Israeli capability for economic penetration remained negligible and limited in the Arab world.¹⁶⁶

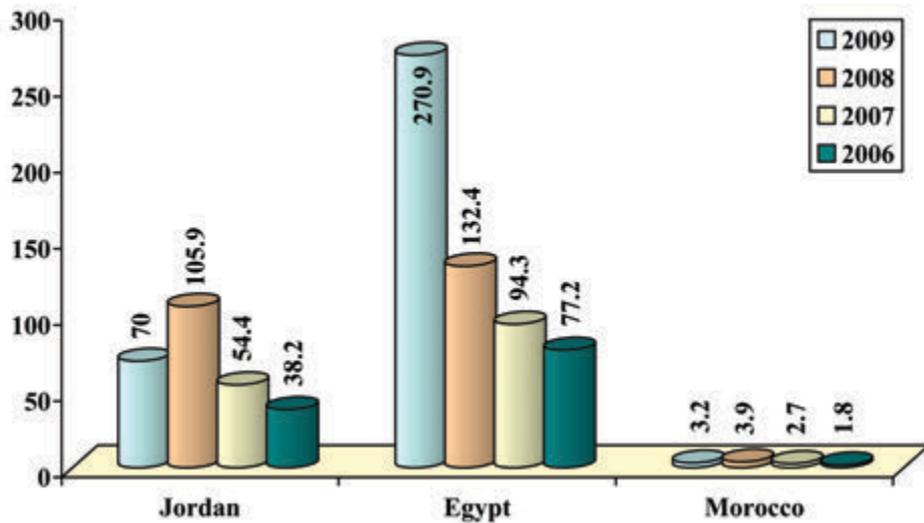
**Table 1/3: Israeli Exports and Imports with Some Arab Countries
2006–2009 (\$ million)¹⁶⁷**

Countries	Israeli exports to:				Israeli imports from:			
	2009	2008	2007	2006	2009	2008	2007	2006
Jordan	231.2	288.5	250.7	136.6	70	105.9	54.4	38.2
Egypt	134	139	153.6	126.7	270.9	132.4	94.3	77.2
Morocco	17.7	20.6	16.6	11.5	3.2	3.9	2.7	1.8

Israeli Exports to Some Arab Countries 2006–2009 (\$ million)



Israeli Imports from Some Arab Countries 2006–2009 (\$ million)



Fourth: The Arab Popular Stance and Its Orientations

The beginning of 2009 witnessed a remarkable Arab public support for the Palestinians following the Israeli aggression on GS, where the public events in solidarity with the Gazans continued over 2009. The steadfastness of the Palestinian resistance in GS mobilized the Arab street against the official silence over what was happening in GS. The position of the Arab street towards the Palestinian issue showed the deep rift between the official performance and the public will to support the Palestinian people directly. This, in fact, embarrassed many Arab regimes which were afraid that further development in the public movement might threaten their stability. Thus, public demonstrations supporting the Palestinian people were many times faced with arrest and prevention.

The demonstrations and different supporting events of the Arab street, during the offensive on GS, showed how much it is connected to the Palestinian issue. In addition, these protests were an Arab public referendum on the Palestinian resistance, which endorsed the right of the Palestinian people to all forms of resistance. In Egypt, demonstrations swept all governorates, while the Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, Muhammad Mahdi ‘Akef, accused the Arab regime of complicity with Israel and the USA. He called for the opening of the

Rafah crossing “to pass weapons to the Palestinians” in addition to humanitarian aid. He also demanded “the severing of relations with the Zionist enemy, and to stop supplying it with gas and oil.”¹⁶⁸

On the other hand, the Popular Campaign for Stopping the Export of Egyptian Natural Gas to Israel warned the Egyptian government that if the decision of the Administrative Court to suspend gas exports to Israel were not implemented, there would be a return to the time of *fida'iyyin* (guerrillas) who would get their rights back with their own hands.¹⁶⁹ Egyptian opposition MPs accused their government of complicity with Israel. They said in a press conference, which they held after they were prevented from entering GS, that the Egyptian regime “was collaborating with Israel to starve, besiege and kill the Palestinian people besides playing a symphony of fraud and falsehood about allowing humanitarian aid into Gaza.”¹⁷⁰ Moreover, the Egyptian opposition condemned the Egyptian government’s approval of holding a race for Israeli motorcyclists and opening the Rafah crossing nine days for the contestants.¹⁷¹

Regarding the Goldstone Report, the Egyptian Bar Association called for a public trial for the Palestinian President Mahmud ‘Abbas in its headquarters in central Cairo, on the basis of his stands towards the Palestinian issue, especially postponing the discussion of the Goldstone Report.¹⁷² Islamist and independent MPs demanded, through the parliament, the halt of the construction of the steel wall on the Egyptian borders with GS. The Secretary-General of the Muslim Brotherhood Parliamentary Bloc, Muhammad al-Baltaji said that “the construction of the steel wall is an Israeli and American priority, and it is never acceptable to market it as a priority for the Egyptian people.” Al-Baltaji also said that the presence of tunnels is a crime in itself for which the Egyptian government is responsible. It has forced 1.5 million Palestinians to resort to tunnels as the only way to get their essential needs, after it has closed the Rafah crossing.¹⁷³

In Jordan, public demonstrations swept the streets of Jordanian cities where hundreds of thousands denounced the Israeli offensive on the Palestinians in GS. The National Forum of Professional Associations and Opposition Parties organized a central festival in which more than 100 thousand people participated. There, President of the Associations Board and Head of Jordan Agricultural Engineers Association (JAEA), Abdul Hadi Falahat, said that the Jordanians show their solidarity with GS “because it is paying the price of freedom although it is

being burnt by the vindictive Zionist aggression, and because it is defending the whole nation, Amman and Cairo, besides all Arab cities.” Falahat reiterated the need to annul Wadi ‘Arbah Treaty, Oslo and Camp David Accords signed with Israel.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, The Jordan Engineers Association organized a campaign for the reconstruction of GS, under the motto “We will get it back more beautiful and powerful.” The campaign allows individuals or groups to purchase “shares” as a donation for GS reconstruction projects. Each “JD100 share* is equivalent to the cost of building one-half square metre, while a half-share (JD50) would fund a quarter-square metre of construction.”¹⁷⁵

The public movement in Kuwait was indeed striking, where thousands participated in angry demonstrations in solidarity with GS, chanting slogans in support for the Palestinian resistance and condemning the Arab and international silence.¹⁷⁶ The Palestine Charity Committee organized a fund-raising campaign under the banner “Gaza... We are with you.” The Committee also organized, in collaboration with civil society organizations, humanitarian and medical relief convoys for the Gazans.¹⁷⁷ Prior to the end of the Israeli offensive on GS, the Kuwaiti Committee for the Support of Gaza organized a festival where Isma‘il Haniyyah’s head-cover (*Kuftyah*) was sold in an auction for 100 thousand Kuwaiti Dinars (equivalent to \$345 thousand).¹⁷⁸ In the context of the Arab Economic and Social Development Summit, which was held on 19/1/2009 in Kuwait, 21 Kuwaiti MPs called on the Kuwaiti people to express their disapproval of Mahmud ‘Abbas’s participation in the summit on the basis of being a persona non grata. The MPs said that President ‘Abbas has taken negative and defeatist stands regarding the Israeli war on the besieged Gazans, while he showed candid position in restricting the legitimate resistance operations against the occupation.¹⁷⁹

The Moroccan capital, Rabat, has in its turn witnessed on 4/1/2009 a massive protest where roughly million demonstrators participated to express solidarity with GS. Demonstrators, who hailed the Palestinian resistance, came from different political, human rights, women and youth organizations besides trade unions.¹⁸⁰

On 14/2/2009 the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) held a conference in collaboration with Palestinian and international human rights organizations entitled “Israel: War Crimes and Genocide.” The conference concluded its work on 15/2/2009 calling for:

* JD = Jordanian Dinars.

lifting the siege, opening crossings, particularly the Rafah crossing, and facilitating access of individuals, materials and the organizations and bodies concerned with compiling crime evidence to the Gaza Strip, the purpose being to ensure a comprehensive documenting of the Israeli war crimes as a prelude to the trial of the Israeli war criminals.¹⁸¹

In the KSA, a group of scholars and preachers in Mecca issued a statement which emphasized the legitimacy of armed resistance as well as the necessity of supporting fighters through funds, arms and prayers. The statement called the Islamic and Arab governments to “back the Palestinian legitimate government elected in Gaza with all forms of political, economic and military support and to make every possible effort to lift tyranny and aggression exercised against them.” The Saudi scholars also called the Egyptian government to bear its responsibility and open the Rafah crossing permanently and without restrictions.¹⁸²

With an official initiative, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Campaign for the Relief of the Palestinian People in Gaza was launched. The Campaign received wide public response from businessmen, traders, industrialists and stores owners where it could raise around \$55 million donations.¹⁸³

The situation was not different in Lebanon where demonstrations swept most of the Lebanese cities in support for the Palestinians in GS, as rallies moved from the Egyptian Embassy to the American Embassy. *Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah*, in addition to some Lebanese Islamic and national groups, organized a number of events in solidarity with GS. Moreover, the refugee camps in Lebanon witnessed a similar movement during the aggression on GS. Hizbullah organized a rally in Qana under the slogan “Glory for Gaza” with a wide participation from Islamic and national Lebanese and Palestinian forces. Member of Loyalty to the Resistance parliamentary bloc MP Hasan Fadlullah said in his speech that “when the war objectives collapse, and the enemy stands at the gates of cities and refugee camps not daring to enter and is forced to retreat, then we could say at the top of our voice that we are witnessing a new victory, a new dawn and a new defeat for this enemy.”¹⁸⁴

The Syrian capital, Damascus, was also among the cities which witnessed massive demonstrations that expressed solidarity with the Palestinians during the Israeli offensive on GS. The demonstrators of the political, religious, economic, social, women, students and civil society organizations denounced

the US stands, which are biased to Israel, and the impotence of the UN and the Security Council.¹⁸⁵

In Sudan, demonstrations continued all during the war. On 8/1/2009, around a million Sudanese participated in a demonstration in Khartoum, where the Sudanese National Assembly Speaker Ahmed Ibrahim al-Tahir called the participators to prepare for days similar to those of GS. Besides, the Chairperson of the Sudanese Popular Campaign in support of the people of Gaza, Fathi Khalil, called the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon to resign from his position.¹⁸⁶ On the first Friday of the Israeli aggression on GS, mosque preachers devoted the Friday sermon to denounce the Israeli aggression. They asked, also, the Sudanese to provide in-kind support for the Gazans. On the same level, Sudan Doctors Union announced a state of alert among its members for fund-raising. It also sent a medical convoy to GS at the cost of more than \$1 million with the participation of surgeons, anesthesia specialists in addition to medical assistants. Moreover, the Sudanese Popular Campaign continued to send its convoys with medical equipment, medicine and blood units compiled from the Sudanese people to the Palestinians in GS.¹⁸⁷

In Yemen, angry demonstrators stormed the headquarters of the Egyptian Consulate and raised the Palestinian flag over the building in protest against closing Rafah crossing.¹⁸⁸ The Yemeni street responded to the donation campaigns, which were launched in the mosques of Sana'a and some big cities, in a way that reflected the immensity of the Yemeni sympathy with the Palestinian people. The sum of contributions collected spontaneously in big mosques was estimated at hundreds of millions of Yemeni Rials, in addition to the striking scene where some Yemenis donated their cars and houses, while others donated jewelry.¹⁸⁹ Sheikh 'Abd al-Majid al-Zindani called for the prompt opening of training camps to prepare volunteers to fight Israel. He stressed also, in a Friday sermon, that "if volunteer camps were opened in the Arab world and millions of youths joined for training, then America would ask Israel to step back."¹⁹⁰ On the other hand, 60 MPs in the Yemeni Parliament demanded never to receive or deal with the Palestinian President Mahmud 'Abbas, whom they accused of not supporting the resistance.¹⁹¹

The Mauritanian capital witnessed violent confrontations between thousands of protestors and policemen who tried to secure the Israeli embassy, where the protestors succeeded in destroying its façade. The demonstrators called for the

expulsion of the Israeli ambassador from Nouakchott, the closure of the embassy and to recall the Mauritanian ambassador in Tel Aviv. The Mauritanian Party of Union and Change (HATEM) organized a festival expressing joy over the steadfastness of the GS. Moreover, Mauritanian Garrison for the Struggle against the Zionist Invasion organized a gala dinner in which it gathered in-kind and financial donations for the Gazans.¹⁹²

In the gulf countries, there were massive demonstrations condemning the aggression. The Bahraini capital witnessed protests where thousands participated over several days.¹⁹³ In addition, thousands of locals and residents in Qatar marched through the streets to show support and solidarity with the Palestinians in GS. Thousands of Palestinians and Arabs living in UAE participated in two rallies; the first was in the Palestinian Embassy in Abu Dhabi and the other in the Palestinian Consulate in Dubai, to express solidarity with the Palestinian people and condemn the Israeli crimes.¹⁹⁴ In Algeria, more than 140 thousands demonstrated in different cities denouncing the aggression.¹⁹⁵

Tripoli and other Libyan cities witnessed massive demonstrations in which protestors denounced the Arab negligence and called for the withdrawal of the Arab Peace Initiative. Some demonstrators attacked the Egyptian Embassy and hurled stones at it.¹⁹⁶

Conclusion

The year 2009 was one more proof of the continuous Arab official incompetence where the Palestinian issue is concerned, while the defects of the Arab regime still directly and indirectly impact this issue. There is no doubt that the ability of the Arab world to provide support has been affected by the Palestinian schism. However, the Arab weakness and impotency existed way before this schism.

The Israeli offensive on GS (27/12/2008–18/1/2009) has revealed the impotence of the Arab regime, its division and inability to defend the Palestinians there. Even worse, some regimes have prioritized the considerations of American influence and their commitment towards Israel besides their disagreements with Hamas or Islamists over the considerations of Arab national security and their obligations towards Palestine. The Arab regime did not succeed in lifting the siege imposed

on the Palestinians; neither did it succeed in fulfilling its commitments to the reconstruction of the GS. Whereas the suffering of the Gazans continued to be blatant evidence on the inability of this regime.

The steadfastness of the resistance in the GS and its impressive performance, despite its limited potentials, inflamed the enthusiasm of the Arab masses that reacted largely through fund-raising and demonstrations. Gaza Emergency Summit in Doha held on 16/1/2009 was a reflection of this reaction, in spite of the Arab boycott for the conference. Hosting Khalid Mish'al to speak, on the behalf of the resistance and Palestine, was a major political breakthrough for Hamas in which Qatar played a major role, particularly after President 'Abbas abstained from attending the summit. However, this breakthrough was only temporary and limited and the glory which Hamas has achieved soon waned. The Arab regime returned to dealing with President 'Abbas and the Ramallah-based government, and the policy of isolating Hamas and its government returned, too.

During 2009, Egypt continued to be the main Arab player in the Palestinian affairs contrary to the past two years which witnessed Saudi, Qatari, Yemeni, Sudanese... efforts. The reconciliation efforts were mainly Egyptian, where Cairo hosted many rounds of dialogue. These efforts ended with Egypt presenting a reconciliation paper on which Fatah signed and Hamas showed reservations.

It was clear that the Egyptian government dealt with Hamas and its government as a burden or a "problem." Egypt continued its closure of Rafah crossing and its restrictions on donations and relief convoys, and then it constructed the Steel Wall to eliminate tunnels which supply the GS with around 50% of its needs. All these were considered by Hamas as an Egyptian bias to Fatah and the PA in Ramallah, as well as a practical participation in weakening Hamas and overthrowing it.

In Jordan, the breakthrough in the relation with Hamas in the second half of 2008 soon became stagnant during 2009, when the Director of the General Intelligence Department Muhammad al-Thahabi was dismissed. The issue of the relation between Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan witnessed a wide internal debate. It was one of the issues which the Jordanian authorities have followed attentively for its probable impacts on the Jordanian arena. Thus, there was a clear desire to "disengage" these two parties. On the other hand, Jordan apologized for not hosting the Sixth Congress of Fatah, thus prompting the latter to hold its conference in the WB.



Syria continued to lead the Arab refusal front, and continued hosting Hamas and the other Palestinian resistance factions. Yet, it was keen to stay at equal distance regarding ending the Palestinian schism and achieving Palestinian unity. It further called for the reconsideration of the Arab Peace Initiative if Israel continued its aggression on the GS and the siege on the Palestinians. In 2009, the Israeli-Syrian negotiations which were conducted indirectly through Turkish mediation were affected by the formation of a right-wing government under Netanyahu's leadership.

In Lebanon, the suffering of the Palestinian refugees continued together with depriving them of their civil rights in labor and ownership. Despite the Lebanese and Palestinian consensus on refusing naturalization, some parties used the latter as a weapon—in depicting it as a scarecrow—to make sure that the Palestinians do not get the basic human rights. The reconstruction of Nahr al-Bared faced many hindrances, despite the availability of necessary planning and funding, and reconstruction works were not resumed except on 26/10/2009. However, in August 2010, a substantial though limited progress was made when the Lebanese parliament passed a law, which granted the Palestinians partial rights to work and social security and within certain terms.

In 2009, KSA did not play a mediatory role in the Palestinian reconciliation, but rather remained in the moderate front and did not participate in the Arab Emergency Summit in Doha. However, it remained the major Arab financial supporter for Palestine, both on the official and public levels. The Saudi relations with Hamas were cold till late 2009, when KSA agreed to receive Khalid Mish'al who visited the Kingdom in early 2010. This breakthrough was followed by similar visits by Hamas leaders to many gulf countries including UAE, Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait.

The normalization between Israel and the Arab countries remained limited to the countries which have signed peace agreements with Israel, namely Egypt and Jordan. The state of large-scale antagonism to Israel on the public level in all Arab countries, including Egypt and Jordan, participated to confining normalization to the official level. While the Israeli aggression on GS and its siege contributed to the rise in the state of enmity and hatred towards Israel.

Endnotes

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- ³ Aljazeera.net, 17/1/2009, <http://www.aljazeera.net/news/archive/archive?ArchiveId=1166867>
- ⁴ Gaza Emergency Summit Concluded, site of Qatar Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 16/1/2009, <http://english.mofa.gov.qa/newmofasite/newsPage.cfm?newsid=4892>
- ⁵ *Addustour* and *al-Hayat*, 21/1/2009.
- ⁶ Doha Declaration, Summit of South American-Arab Countries, 31/3/2009, www2.mre.gov.br/aspa/doha_declaration.doc
- ⁷ *Al-Sharq*, Doha, 29/3/2009.
- ⁸ *Addustour*, 22/2/2009.
- ⁹ *Al-Sharq*, Doha, 18/2/2009.
- ¹⁰ *Al-Hayat*, 4/3/2010.
- ¹¹ *Haaretz*, 25/12/2008.
- ¹² Quds Press, 27/12/2008.
- ¹³ *Alquds* newspaper, 27/12/2008; and *al-Qabas* newspaper, Kuwait, 28/12/2008.
- ¹⁴ *Al-Hayat*, 9/1/2009; see the speech of Egyptian President Husni Mubarak in *al-Ahram*, 31/12/2008; and his statement in *al-Ahram*, 3/1/2009.
- ¹⁵ *The New York Times*, 30/12/2008.
- ¹⁶ *Almesryoon* newspaper, Cairo, 3/1/2009.
- ¹⁷ *Assafir*, 1/1/2009.
- ¹⁸ *Asharq Alawsat*, 5/1/2009.
- ¹⁹ *Almesryoon*, 13/1/2009.
- ²⁰ *Al-Masry al-Youm* newspaper, Cairo, 29/1/2009.
- ²¹ See the interview of Khalid Mish'al with Aljazeera TV, Aljazeera.net, 29/12/2008; the statement of Isma'il Haniyyah, Aljazeera.net, 1/1/2009; the statement of Muhammad Nazzal, *Assabeel*, 6/1/2009; and the statement of Mahmud al-Zahhar, *Asharq Alawsat*, 6/1/2009.
- ²² *Al-Hayat*, 31/12/2008.
- ²³ *Al-Hayat*, 7/1/2009.
- ²⁴ See *Almesryoon*, 28/12/2008; and *al-Khaleej*, 18/1/2009.
- ²⁵ PIC, 28/12/2008.
- ²⁶ *Al-Ahram*, 3/1/2009.
- ²⁷ *Al-Khaleej*, 4/1/2009.
- ²⁸ Quds Press, 27/12/2008.
- ²⁹ *Al-Hayat*, 31/12/2008.
- ³⁰ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 30/12/2008.
- ³¹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 30/12/2008.
- ³² See *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 3/1/2009; and see *Asharq Alawsat*, 13/1/2009.



- ³³ Site of Egypt State Information Service, 7/1/2009, <http://www.us.sis.gov.eg/En/EgyptOnline/Politics/000010/020100000000000009774.htm>
- ³⁴ See *Alghad*, 8/1/2009; PIC, 10/1/2009; and *al-Khaleej*, 16/1/2009.
- ³⁵ *Al-Hayat*, 7/1/2009.
- ³⁶ *Al-Hayat*, 9/1/2009.
- ³⁷ See the statement of the official Egyptian Foreign Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Husam Zaki, *al-Hayat*, 14/1/2009.
- ³⁸ *Alarab*, 16/1/2009.
- ³⁹ *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 29/1/2009.
- ⁴⁰ *Al-Hayat*, 21/10/2009.
- ⁴¹ *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, 24/10/2009.
- ⁴² For example, see the statement of the Egyptian President Husni Mubarak, *al-Ahram*, 3/1/2009; the statement of the Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmad Abu al-Ghait, *Almesryoon*, 3/1/2009; and the latter's statement also in *al-Hayat*, 22/7/2009.
- ⁴³ Aljazeera.net, 15/1/2009.
- ⁴⁴ 23 Days of War, 928 Days of Closure: Life One Year after Israel's Latest Offensive on the Gaza Strip, 27 December 2008 – 18 January 2009, PCHR, December 2009, p. 28, http://www.pchrgaza.org/files/Reports/English/pdf_spec/23-days.pdf; and The State of Gaza Strip Border Crossings 11 March 2009 – 31 May 2009, PCHR, 3/6/2009, http://www.pchrgaza.org/portal/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2562:the-state-of-gaza-strip-border-crossings-11-march-2009-31-may-2009&catid=63:closure-update&Itemid=227
- ⁴⁵ Concerning the news of preventing delegations and aid convoys or delaying them, see for example *Alghad*, 2/2/2009; *Asharq Alawsat*, 5/2/2009; *Alarab*, 30/1/2009 and 16/7/2009; and Quds Press, 10/1/2010.
- ⁴⁶ The media covered the news of the convoy especially in the period 25/12/2009–7/1/2010.
- ⁴⁷ Aljazeera.net, 7/1/2010.
- ⁴⁸ *Alarab*, 5/1/2010.
- ⁴⁹ See *al-Quds al-Arabi*, 14/5/2009; and *al-Sharq*, Doha, 26/7/2009.
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Chapter Four

The Palestinian Issue and the Muslim World

The Palestinian Issue and the Muslim World

Introduction

The events of 2009 and the Israeli aggression on GS during the same year have brought to the fore the various facets of the disparity between the two levels at which the Muslim world deals with the Palestinian issue. The first level pertains to the strong public support for the Palestinian people in the GS, which was reflected through demonstrations and donation campaigns aimed at consolidating the steadfastness of the Palestinian people. In some countries, there were demands that the Muslim state governments take action in stopping the Israeli aggression on GS and allow the volunteers to join the military struggle. The second level involves the official Muslim states and shows differing stances from one country to the other during the year 2009. At the time we see direct financial and political support from Iran, and we see a clear standing toward the Israeli assault from Turkey whose Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stood up at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos and described the Israelis of being murderers, then left the place. We also see the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) sufficing with criticism, condemnation and the calls to stop “violence.”

In this chapter we will review some details of the OIC position, in addition to the stances of two major countries that have played a prominent role in the Palestinian issue during 2009, i.e., Turkey and Iran. The chapter also examines some of the official and public action in Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan and their after effects during 2009.

First: The Organization of the Islamic Conference

The discourse or policies of the OIC toward the Palestinian issue have not witnessed any significant changes during 2009, ranging from disapproval to condemnation and conviction. The OIC continued these condemnations of the Israeli aggression and military operations in the GS at the end of 2008 and the outbreak of 2009, calling for the prosecution of Israel for committing war crimes in the GS. The OIC also declared its continuous support for the Palestinian people and

their rights in the WB and GS. It called for implementing international resolutions and activated its diplomatic efforts concerning the Israeli aggression on Islamic holy sites and the Israeli excavations in East Jerusalem.

The OIC scaled up its diplomatic efforts to deal with the Israeli offensive against the GS. It held a joint meeting with the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in addition to meetings with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), attended by a representative of the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO).

On 3/1/2009, one week after the onset of the Israeli operations in the GS, the OIC held an Expanded Extraordinary Ministerial Meeting of the Executive Committee for the member states. The meeting strongly condemned the brutal Israeli assault on the Palestinian people in Gaza, and it expressed its dismay over the inability of the UN Security Council to take the necessary steps for a ceasefire and demanded the Council to fulfill its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It requested “the international community to act immediately to end the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, to secure an immediate ceasefire, return to calm, and cessation of all hostilities to provide immediate protection for the Palestinian people.” It called for “the stationing of an international monitoring mission in the Gaza Strip, following the cessation of fire, preferably under the UN umbrella, to de-escalate the conflict and stabilize the situation.” It requested “the Group of Ambassadors of OIC Member States in Geneva to finalize its effort to convene an emergency session of the Human Rights Council on the violation of human rights caused by the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip.”¹

Apparently, the international security and peacekeeping apparatus represented in the UN and its different international affiliations, whose decision making process is largely controlled by the USA, do not take into account the international Islamic apparatus represented by the OIC that rejects the repeated Israeli attacks on the Palestinian people. This fact may be owing to the positions and alliances between some influential Arab and Muslim countries inside the OIC and the American and European countries that foster Israel. Hence, no positive reaction was expected from the UN and its major countries to stop the Israeli aggression on the GS and carry out the demands of the OIC. Consequently, the OIC turned mainly toward providing humanitarian aid to the Gazans. It launched a humanitarian relief campaign, on 4/1/2009, to “provide the minimum requirements of the basic human needs to the population in the Gaza Strip.”² The OIC was able to allow a convoy of relief aid

to the GS through the Rafah Crossing that included 300 tons of medicine, medical equipment and food supplies. The second convoy was sent from Jeddah carrying 170 tons of medical supplies and foodstuff in cooperation with the Saudi Red Crescent Authority (SRCA). The OIC also made commitments at the International Conference in Support of the Palestinian Economy for the Reconstruction of Gaza, held on 2/3/2009 in Sharm el-Sheikh, to contribute \$100 million.³ Moreover, the OIC sent, on 19/4/2009, a convoy of humanitarian aid of 23 truckloads to the GS and on 6/5/2009 it sent another convoy of 43 trucks carrying around a thousand tons with an overall value of \$3.22 million.⁴ In addition, on 19/6/2009, the OIC inaugurated the first specialized eye hospital in the GS. It is worth mentioning that the overall assistance provided during the period January-June 2009, by the OIC and its partners in the field of emergency relief, has reached around \$8 million.⁵

On 15/3/2009, OIC Secretary-General Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu made an inspection visit to GS with a high-level delegation where he examined the destruction done by the Israeli aggression. During the visit, Ihsanoğlu and the accompanying delegation met a number of Hamas leaders and representatives of civil society organizations where he reaffirmed the necessity of completing the track of Palestinian national reconciliation.⁶

During 2009, the OIC continued its condemnations of the Israeli attacks on the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem. In an interview with *al-Raya* newspaper, Ihsanoğlu said that the danger of the excavations under *al-Aqsa* Mosque far exceeds that of the fire of *al-Aqsa* Mosque 40 years ago. He added that these excavations expose the Mosque to severe harm, leading to its corrosion underneath and above. Thus, adding a new element to the equation; dividing the Mosque between Muslims and Jews as the case is in the Ibrahimi Mosque (The Sanctuary of Abraham) in Hebron. Ihsanoğlu attributed the OIC's inability to make a fundamental change in the de facto situation—which the Israeli occupation attempts to impose in Jerusalem—to the lack of political will on the side of the member countries as well as the Palestinian political will. He explained that the statements and diplomatic efforts made by the OIC will not effect a change in the dreadful situation that Israel has caused in Jerusalem. In his interpretation to the reactions to the Palestinian issue during the attack on the GS, Ihsanoğlu said that the Palestinian issue has lost its momentum and its supporters He owed this to the failure to employ the historical opportunities to confirm the Palestinian national rights, and he cited the way in which the Goldstone Report was handled. He also

called for the necessity of taking action and putting pressure on international organizations and major countries to assert Palestinian rights.⁷

The Expanded Extraordinary Ministerial Meeting of the Executive Committee of the OIC was held on 1/11/2009 to discuss the Israeli assaults on *al-Aqsa* Mosque where they emphasized “that the question of the Holy Haram in Al Quds is a red line that can absolutely not be addressed with laxity or be subject of any debate.” It affirmed that:

all Israeli legislative, administrative, and colonial settlement procedures and measures aimed at altering the legal, demographic, architectural, cultural, and heritage-related status of the Holy City constitute a violation of the resolutions of international legitimacy and international covenants and conventions, in particular resolution no. 465 of the UN Security Council. It demands the UN Security Council to revive the International Supervision and Monitoring Committee to Prevent and Prohibit Colonial Settlement in *Al-Quds* and the Occupied Arab Territories, in accordance with its Resolution 446.

The meeting also wielded many resolutions calling for the protection of Jerusalem and the Islamic and Christian holy sites.⁸

The above were a few examples of how the OIC handled the Palestinian issue during 2009. It continued the habitual past-years criticism and condemnation of the Israeli attacks against the Palestinian people and holy sites. Seemingly, this condition is not bound for any essential change in the near future.

Second: Turkey

The Israeli offensive on GS at the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009 imposed itself on the general course of Turkish-Israeli political, economic and military relations. It had its effects, also, on the Turkish stance towards the Palestinian issue and all related issues that concern Turkey along 2009.

The offensive caused deep and large repercussions in Turkish-Israeli relations that remained as the year ended. In addition, on 31/5/2010, the Israelis attacked the Freedom Flotilla, which was trying to break the GS siege, killing nine Turks. This event was a turning point in the Turkish-Israeli relations, which deteriorated afterwards to a large extent in the second half of 2010 (We will fully discuss the event and its repercussions in the next *Palestinian Strategic Report*).

1. Bilateral Relations with Israel

Turkey was enraged, in the person of its prime minister, when the Israeli aggression on GS began only four days after the visit of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to Turkey on 22/12/2008. On the one hand, the visit made implications that the attack was carried out with the prior knowledge of Turkey, and on the other, the aggression came contrary to Olmert's confirmations to Erdoğan that Israel would not take any action to disturb the relative stability of the situation with GS. Taking this into consideration, Erdoğan considered the attack a lack of respect to Turkey with Olmert breaching his promises.

During and after the attack, Erdoğan repeatedly and strongly condemned the aggression. On 29/1/2009, his condemnations had the well-known climax in his famous stand at the WEF. There, he objected to the way the session was moderated, where he was the guest speaker with Israeli President Shimon Peres, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, and Secretary-General of the Arab League 'Amr Musa. Erdoğan soon left the session objecting and saying that Davos is over for him and that he will not go back to it again. Erdoğan's stand was received with waves of support in Palestine and the Arab World, and with deep indignation by the Israeli side and different circles in the West.

In the context of western reactions, the Jewish lobby in the USA sent a letter to Erdoğan, a few days before Davos, expressing their indignation at Erdoğan's stance towards Israel and its influence on the spread of anti-Semitic manifestations in Turkey.⁹

Along the days of the attack, Turkish officials were careful to express their principle stance of supporting the Palestinian people in GS. Even when the Conference on Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance in Gaza in Sharm el-Sheikh was held in January 2009, Turkish President Abdullah Gül refused to accompany the leaders of European countries to Tel Aviv saying that Turkey is not concerned with it. Gül added:

The United States and Israel reached a compromise last week to ensure control over tunnels and passages leading from Egypt to Israel. The United States undertook the control. And some European countries expressed their readiness to assist the United States to ensure that control. They went to Israel to renew their support to the process. It has nothing to do with us.¹⁰

He pointed out the specific Turkish position regarding GS saying that Turkey is not in a position to send troops to GS at that stage.

From the heart of Brussels, Erdoğan stood addressing the Turkish community and, indirectly, Israel. He asked if GS belong to Israel and what is Israel doing there. Erdoğan criticized the double standards applied by the West saying that there is no respect for human rights and law. None of them could secure a place on the agenda of the international community in the past three weeks. The UN Security Council adopts a resolution and Israel does not recognize it. He asked why was no sanctions applied and added that he need a concrete result. Then he wondered why do they apply double standards. Erdoğan added that Israel says that it said it had achieved its objectives. Then he wondered what did it actually achieve? Children and defenceless civilians were killed. He added that he is taking an emotional approach to those children, and this is not only because he is a Muslim, but also because he is a human being. There is an unrestricted and disproportionate use of force. Then he asked does Gaza belong to Israel? What is Israel doing there?¹¹

The peak of Turkish anger against Israel was reached in Davos when Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan blasted the largest bomb in the history of Turkish-Israeli relations confronting Israeli President Shimon Peres. During the session, Erdoğan commenced his speech by saying:

Before replying to the question as to what's need to be done, I think its also important that we analyze the current situation because we need to do a proper analysis of the current situation in order to determine what steps need to be taken. I'm not going to start from forty years ago in making the situation analysis, I'm just going to go as far back as June 2008... There was a ceasefire, which was stated, agreed to, and there was no problem to the ceasefire that was to last for six months, but when the ceasefire ended, six months later, there were no rocket attacks, at that point. In the mean time, the Israeli side was to lift the embargo... However, the Palestinian territories are like an open air prison, because it is completely isolated from the rest of the world... so if you try to bring in a case of tomatoes from any crossing into the Palestinian territories you must get the permission of the Israeli side... We tried to send humanitarian aid to Turkish Red Crescent, tried to provide aid, but it took quite a while, two weeks sometimes, to have the trucks cross the crossings.

Erdoğan mentioned that Olmert refused the exchange of prisoners with Hamas. Erdoğan asked the audience to:

think of the military power of Israel including the weapons of mass destruction and whether or not there is anything that is similar in Gaza... They don't have that kind of power. The UN Security Council met and the resolution was announced, but Israel did not recognize this resolution... the UN center was also hit during the course of this war, and schools mosques were also hit, but mankind or humanity as a whole did not really act as quickly as they should have in trying to help the people there... We must definitely achieve peace in the Middle East because that's important and necessary for global peace... I think that in the National Unity government to be established in Palestine, this Party of Reform and Change must be there, and that is how the National Unity Government has to be established. Then, elections have to take place and once a new government is in place, whether or not we like them, will be and should be the government of the Palestinian people because we have to respect the will of [the Palestinian people].

He said:

President Peres, you are older than I am, and you have a very strong voice. I feel that you perhaps feel a bit guilty and that's why perhaps you have been so strong in your words, so loud. Well you killed people, I remember the children who died on beaches, and I remember two former prime ministers in your country who said they felt very happy when they were able to enter Palestine on tanks... And I find it very sad that people applaud what you have said because there have been many people who have been killed, and I think that it is very wrong and it is not humanitarian to applaud any actions which have had that kind of a result.

Despite the moderator attempting to stop Erdoğan from continuing his speech, Erdoğan insisted on speaking, using some notes he had in a file. He quoted the sixth commandment: "Thou shall not kill" and added "but we are talking about killing." Then he said, "Gilad Atzmon says that 'Israeli barbarianism is way beyond what it should be.' Then there is the International Relations professor from Oxford University Avi Shlaim has said this..." Erdoğan wrapped up saying that "I don't think I will come back to Davos after this, thank you, because you don't let me speak. The president spoke for 25 minutes, I have spoken only half of that."



Erdoğan then left his seat and the session, while ‘Amr Musa stood to congratulate him on his speech but remained in his place without following Erdoğan’s example.

After leaving the session, Erdoğan said in a statement that Davos meetings were unfair. I have a flexible mind but I am not some kind of patient sheep.¹²

The “one minute” phrase became a password and slogan tackled by Turkish websites. It became considered the new slogan of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi—AKP*), and used widely by the calling audience of television shows. They drew resemblance between the phrase and American President Barack Obama’s slogan “Yes We Can.” Erdoğan had repeated the phrase “one minute” more than once in context of asking the session moderator David Ignatius to give him the platform to comment on Peres’s speech and to stop interrupting him. He said it in English not in Turkish.

Returning from Davos a few hours after the Davos session, Erdoğan was received by thousands of people at the airport obstructing the traffic, waving Turkish and Palestinian flags and carrying banners that described Erdoğan as “Conqueror of Davos” and “New World Leader.” The crowds gathering lined up at the gates of Erdoğan’s house till the first hours of the morning throwing thousands of carnations in front of his house and the surrounding corridors to show their support for his stances.¹³

Among Erdoğan’s most important statements upon his return to Turkey were saying, “I don’t speak the same language with the retired diplomats. I come from politics not diplomacy. I have to protect the dignity of my people.” He added that “Our people would have expected the same reaction from any Turkish prime minister... This was a matter of the esteem and prestige of my country. Hence, my reaction had to be clear. I could not have allowed anyone to poison the prestige and in particular the honor of my country.”¹⁴

Later, Erdoğan prayed Dhuhr prayer at Yali Mosque in Istanbul and in a speech given at the inauguration of an Istanbul metro station, he reaffirmed that what matters is not what others say but what we say. He added that silence about injustice is an act of injustice. Our human traits come prior to the calculations of political power balance.

Erdoğan received huge backing from President Abdullah Gül when the latter said, “A Turkish prime minister of course would not put up with a disrespect if he was shown one. No one should expect that. And the prime minister did what needed

to be done and gave the answer that needed to be given.” Gül added, “Turkey is a great country, which everyone should know. Turkey is a country that always seeks peace, stability and security. And everyone should benefit from Turkey’s power. And if there is someone who does not want to benefit, then it is up to them.”¹⁵

In that wake of these incidents, the first opinion poll following the Davos incident between Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Israeli President Shimon Peres showed that 78% of Turkish people think that Erdoğan’s stance was positive and correct and a sweeping 82% supported Turkish government’s reaction to the GS attacks. A poll, by the Ankara-based MetroPOLL Strategic and Social Research Center, found that only 13% of the sample thought Erdoğan’s reaction was “incorrect,” with 75% viewing Erdoğan as a “straightforward and trusted” person, 81% viewing him as “strong and a decision maker,” and 70% as “democratic and free.” At the same time, 44% thought Erdoğan’s reaction did not encourage anti-Semitism, whereas 37% thought the opposite was true, 41% expected negative repercussions for the relations with Israel and 37% thought otherwise.¹⁶

Election-wise, 49% said they would vote for the AKP, whereas in 2007 elections 47% voted for the AKP and polls prior to Davos demonstrated 39% support. Other parties came far behind with 11% for the left-wing secular extremist Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi—CHP*), and only 5% for the right-wing extremist Nationalist Movement Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi—MHP*).¹⁷

At that time, even opposing voices inside Turkey expressed their support for Erdoğan. Head of the Nationalist Movement Party, Devlet Bahçeli, was the most scathing in condemning Israeli President’s attitude during the Davos session. He said that Peres’ attitude was an example of arrogance and rudeness that our dear nation cannot accept. At the same time, he described Erdoğan’s reaction as right, legitimate and appropriate. He added that Erdoğan’s storming out of the session was not a momentary reaction but was necessary for honoring Turkey and ending a history of the compliance policy. Bahçeli harshly condemned the gestures of Peres when Erdoğan was speaking during the session.¹⁸

For the first time, Erdoğan’s stance also won him support of the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*), founded by the veteran politician Necmettin Erbakan, in a statement by its leader Numan Kurtulmuş. The party’s official newspaper *Milli Gazete* said that for the first time since taking the prime minister’s seat in 2002, Erdoğan has taken a correct stance.¹⁹

Notably enough, Erdoğan's first rival Deniz Baykal, head of the Republican People's Party, joined the list of objectors to Peres' attitude who crossed all boundaries of courtesy toward Erdoğan. However, Baykal called against steering the incident to serve internal politics, and thought it was unlikely that Israeli Turkish relations will be influenced, especially after Peres took the initiative to express to Erdoğan his regret over the incident.²⁰

Moreover, Kurdish Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi—DTP*), which is represented by 21 seats in Parliament, criticized Israel. Its deputy chairperson Emine Ayna stated that “we share the Palestinian people their grievances because we suffer the same grievances.” On the other hand, she strongly condemned Erdoğan who also knows well about killing, and knows how Kurdish lives are taken at the hands of Turkish Army.²¹

In that manner, Turkish writers with their different affiliations unanimously approved of Erdoğan's stance, and criticized Israel and its president.

Turkish Jews

From another angle, the Jewish sect in Turkey made a stance expressing their concern in a statement, by their leader Silvio Ovadia, over anti-Jewish sentiments in Turkey after the onslaught against GS and the Davos incident.

Ovadia stated that whenever similar incidents occurred in the Middle East, this tendency is unleashed in the world because Israel is the only “Jewish state” in the world, and had there been two or more, this wouldn't have happened. The second reason, according to Ovadia, is the lack of distinction between an Israeli and a Jewish person who is a citizen of another country. He explained that this is the problem they live in Turkey. Everyone regards them as part of Israel. The sentiments are similar to those between the Muslims in Turkey and the Muslims in Saudi Arabia or Palestine, there are sentiments between the Jews and Israel as a “Jewish state”; i.e., it is a religion bond, nothing more.

Ovadia further adds that the major problem for Jews in Turkey is not related to religious freedom, albeit some limitations. Although there is not one Jewish ambassador or officer in Turkey, and although we fulfill military service and all the duties of a Turkish citizen, integrate with Turkish culture, and speak Turkish, our biggest problem is that we are viewed as foreigners.

Highlighting the daily practical effects of this anti-Semitic sentiment in Turkey, he says that the percentage of synagogue attenders has decreased by 20%, although he remarks that this is temporary. However, Ovadia stresses that no Jewish person was subject to physical harassment and that security forces are allocating incredible and unbelievable numbers to protect the synagogues, to the extent that “we asked to decrease the numbers but the authorities refused.”

Ovadia says that what alarmed the Jewish community most was the proposition of a moment of silence at schools called for by the minister of education. The minister planned for an art and writing competition about GS at schools, with the participation of seven years old children. The best drawing was going to be the bloodiest. At that point, Ovadia contacted some of the AKP MPs, who called the minister of education and the competition was cancelled.²²

A Military Davos

Turkish-Israeli relations witnessed unprecedented tension in February 2009 that was more like a “military Davos” due to statements given by the then General Officer Commanding (GOC) Ground Forces Command Major-General Avi Mizrahi who attacked the person of the Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan as well as Turkish people and leveled accusations at them of slaughtering Armenians and Kurds and occupying northern Cyprus. Mizrahi was quoted as saying Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan should have “looked in the mirror” before slamming President Shimon Peres.²³

Significantly, the harshest and primary reaction to these words came from the Turkish military institution followed by the Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry’s note to Israel. This was the first time that bilateral relations witnessed a dispute at the military level between the two countries; what reflects the deep wounds caused by Mizrahi’s words in Turkish temper and awareness especially that the accusations were not merely an attack against Erdoğan but extended to national core issues in Turkey concerning the motherland case in Cyprus and the Armenian issue, not to mention an issue such as fighting the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan—PKK*) about which there is almost unanimous agreement inside Turkey. The key point in the Turkish Army statement may be its public reference for the first time to how these remarks could harm the national interests between two countries.

The Turkish army was first to respond to the Israeli official's statements. In an official statement, it said, "These remarks, as the way they were published in the media reports, are considered to be misleading the facts, unfortunate, unacceptable and more importantly in an extent that could harm the national interests between two countries." The military also called on the Israeli army, "which is considered to be attaching great importance to its relations with the Turkish Armed Forces," to clarify Mizrahi's statement.²⁴

Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement said that Mirzahi's remarks violated all forms of diplomatic practices, and contradicted with the historical and current realities therefore these "accusations and nonsensical talks" targeting prime minister and the country had been protested by a note, the Turkish foreign ministry said in a statement.

"Furthermore, we have stressed that the relevant statements of Avi Mizrahi are ungrounded and unacceptable and as such we have requested an urgent explanation from Israeli authorities," the statement added.²⁵

The Israeli response was immediate as Israeli Army spokesman made it clear that Mizrahi's statements do not reflect the official position of the Israeli Army, are not binding and are personal statements.

Israeli Tourism in Turkey

Within a short period of time, the tension in Turkish-Israeli relations left its impact especially on Israeli tourism in Turkey. Israeli Ambassador in Turkey Gabby Levy spoke about how the relations between the two countries are cooling down and deteriorating.²⁶

Levy mentioned important figures reflecting the extent of such deterioration saying that Israeli air flights to Turkey were close to 10 flights per week, whereas now (February 2009) they are merely one or two weekly flights. The number of Israeli tourists in Turkey, during winter and spring, exceeded 150 thousand tourists, whereas now the number is almost a zero.²⁷ Levy added that although Turkish tourist agencies made dream offers to Israeli tourists, the tourists were not daring to come to Turkey. Some agencies offered three full days including travel expenses, residence and trip program for \$200 only. Some even offered two or three days for free. According to Levy, it can be said that the winter tourism between Israel and Turkey was completely dead.

Levy viewed that Israeli tourist's reluctance is not attributed to Prime Minister Erdogan's stance in Davos, but to the rising anti-Semitist and anti-Jewish tendency in Turkey; among the people and in the media. He cited an incident when a basketball match between a Turkish team and its Israeli counterpart in Ankara was cancelled. Due to the anger of Turkish audience the Israeli players' fled for the dressing rooms and the match was cancelled. Levi said that this incident had the largest shocking effect and was the reason for Israelis to refrain from going to Turkey for tourism.

Drill with Syria

Turkish-Israeli relations suffered serious strain due to Turkey's first-ever joint military drill with Syria at the end of April 2009.

Turkish Chief of General Staff İlker Başbuğ took personal charge of responding to the statements of Israeli researchers and officials, who expressed their concern and alarm at the joint Turkish-Syrian military drill. A comprehensive press conference in 28 April, Başbuğ referred to Israeli criticisms saying that he is not interested in Israel's reaction, and that the drills with Syria are a Turkish affair. Başbuğ affirmed the importance of the drill by saying that they are small-scale maneuvers but they are important because they are held for the first time.

İbrahim Karagül wrote in *Yeni Şafak* daily that Israel's main concern is not about the maneuver being a project of the AKP but rather, about the possibility of it being a policy of the Turkish state. Previously, Israel used to take advantage of the military-civil dispute in Turkey, but from this day on they will not be able to play that card and this is the source of its discomfort.²⁸ Karagül added that when Turkey gains more political leverage in the region, the sphere of influence for Israel there will be smaller.

In the same daily, columnist Hakan Albayrak expressed "his deep gratitude" to God that Israel is disturbed by these military drill with Syria. Albayrak reiterated that Israeli, American and Atlantic disturbance is something "that should make us glad." He revealed the falsehood of Israeli allegations—specifically those of Efraim Inbar, director of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies—concerning the Turkish Army's discomfort about the Turkish Syrian drills. Albayrak further asked about the flag the drills were being held under, and whether they were held under the Greek flag.



Erdoğan at the UN

Turkey spared no chance to condemn Israeli practices, and among the platforms where Erdoğan voiced that stance was the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), in New York at the end of September 2009.

In his address, Erdoğan employed a human, legal, and moral approach. He defended the Palestinian issue, specifically the GS, by saying that: “People are living in tents and cannot find drinking water. In the face of this situation, are we fulfilling our humanitarian responsibility? What can the United Nations or the Security Council do? What measures have the United Nations and the Security Council really enacted?” Erdoğan accused the major powers of applying double standards in tackling the region saying that: “the security of the Palestinians is as important as the security of Israel. The Palestinian people’s quest for freedom and peace is as legitimate as Israel’s quest for stability.” Erdoğan also slammed the international community for failing to act according to the commitment they made eight months earlier to reconstruct GS when Israel refused to allow building materials into it.

Yielding weight to Erdoğan’s words is the fact that they come after his meeting with representatives of leading US-Jewish groups. There, Erdoğan said that the problem lies in the fact that Jews label Gazans as “terrorists.” They object to the reconstruction of GS so that “terrorists” will not use it. He asked them how can they declare 1,400 dead people as “terrorists?” Phosphorus was used in the killing and wounding of thousands of civilians, so how can they be declared “terrorists?” To regard Gaza with “terrorism” in mind means the impossibility of going anywhere.

Erdoğan didn’t stop at his speech at the UNGA. At a time when the world’s eyes were turned toward Iran’s declaration of a second uranium enrichment plant in Qom, Erdoğan was pointing to another topic, namely Israel. Erdoğan stated that: “Statements by Ahmadinejad are not about a nuclear weapon but are about peaceful intended enrichment.” Then he added, “We are completely against nuclear weapons in the Middle East. There is a country in the Middle East that possesses nuclear weapon: Israel. There is a difference, though; Israel is not a member of the [International Atomic Energy Agency] IAEA, while Iran is.” Erdoğan said, “Moreover, phosphorus bombs were used in Gaza. What is this? A weapon of mass destruction,” referring to the Israeli army’s deadly offensive in Gaza last

December, leaving more than 1,300 people dead. He added, “These issues are never brought to the table, and this personally annoys me as a person who is in an office [that carries with it] responsibility,” and then said. “That is to say, we need to be fairer. We have to act honestly if we want global peace.”²⁹

In a parallel move, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu cancelled a scheduled visit to Israel in October 2009, after Israel refused to allow him to enter GS through Israel.

The tension between Turkey and Israel peaked as Israeli newspapers announced, on 11/10/2009, that Turkey cancelled Israeli participation in the Anatolian Eagle joint military exercise, a drill which was cancelled completely afterwards. More importantly, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs linked the cancellation of the drill to the situation in GS, and he mentioned that their relations will not improve as long as the situation in GS hasn't improved. An official statement of the Foreign Affairs Ministry said, “The first two stages of this year's exercises were conducted successfully. But international part of the third stage... was cancelled in consultation with the other participating countries. But, the exercise is continuing as a national event. Therefore, it is not correct to impose political meanings to Turkey's decision to cancel international part of the multi-national Anatolian Eagle air defense exercise.” The ministry added, “It is also impossible to accept assessments and comments published in media organs in reference to Israeli authorities. We call on Israeli officials to act with common-sense in their statements and attitudes.”³⁰

In the first comment on the postponement of Anatolian Eagle drills, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu said in a CNN interview that “We hope that the situation in Gaza will be improved, that the situation will be back to the diplomatic track. And that will create a new atmosphere in Turkish-Israeli relations as well. But in the existing situation, of course, we are criticizing this approach, [the] Israeli approach.”³¹

The first Israeli reaction came from Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak who said, “Turkey continues to be a central figure in our region. There is no place for getting drawn into fiery statements against them,” and then added, “The relations between Israel and Turkey are strategic and have existed for dozens of years.”³²

Hostile media campaigns between Turkey and Israel continued after the military drill crisis, as apparent in Turkish television drama “Separation: Palestine in Love and War (*Ayrılık - Askta ve Savasta Filistin*)” which depicts the cruelty of Israeli

soldiers in dealing with Palestinians. After Israeli Ambassador to Ankara Gabby Levy conveyed his protest to Turkish authorities saying that the series depicts Israel as a devil, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan started another barrage of criticism in the city of Kırşehir as he described Israelis, without naming them, as the unjust. In a reference to the Gazans and their children, Erdoğan said, “While some children are opening their eyes to welfare, peace, security, a quality education and a bright future, some of them are opening their eyes to tears, sorrow, a hopeless future and phosphorus bombs.”³³

In relation to the “Separation” television series, some representatives of tourist agencies in Turkey said that the current crisis, and especially due to the series “Separation,” resulted in the cancellation of many reservations on the short term. They explained that should the crisis end now, its negative impact on the arrival of Israeli tourists would continue for at least a month. Official tourism statistics showed that the number of Israeli tourists in Turkey reached 200 thousands in 2009, with an almost 50% downturn from 400 thousand tourists in 2008.

Halil Bakirci, the mayor of the Black Sea city of Rize, also signed his name on the record of protestors to Israeli policies. That happened when he directed harsh criticism to Israeli Ambassador Gabby Levy, who paid him a visit at the municipality office that lasted for five minutes, on 3/11/2009. Halil Bakirci condemned Israel’s “policies of expansion and occupation” and said that as long as these policies continue, Turkish people will not change the way they regard Israel. He added that he believes that Israel must change the way it views the world and its neighbors... Then he said that the peace treaties signed with Egypt and Jordan came by war, and he addressed the Israeli ambassador by saying that self-defense should not involve “killing children.” In another incident, students pelted Israel’s ambassador with eggs to protest Israel’s treatment of Palestinians, forcing him to cancel a visit to the university in the Black Sea port of Trabzon.³⁴

While Israeli Industry, Trade and Labor Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer was making attempt to ease the tension in Turkish-Israeli relations and urging Turkey to act as an unbiased mediator, Israeli President Shimon Peres blasted another bomb that triggered Turkish attention and indignation. In an interview published in an American magazine, Peres said:

Turkey is the only country in the world where a nondemocratic institution, the Army, was in charge of preserving democracy. And they did it. Now the role of the Army has changed, and the question is whether Erdoğan will lead

his Muslim population toward democracy or whether democratic forces will demand a more Islamist state.

Peres added, “The Turkish leadership very much wanted to become a part of united Europe, and the Europeans dragged their feet, and there was a sense of disappointment that caused them to look for another domain where Turkey could play a role.” Also, concerning Turkish mediation in Syrian Israeli talks, Peres said that if Turkey wished to act as a mediator, it should “leave its closeness to one side and go to the middle place between the two countries. So that, too, has had a certain effect. How far does Erdoğan want to go in his push in different directions? I don’t know.”³⁵ And when asked if Israel should be providing front-line military technology to Turkey when Ankara is seeking closer strategic ties with Syria and Iran, Israeli President said, “We need to be very careful not to undermine a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship built up over many years. Turkey is a very important nation in our region and a respected member of NATO. We need patience and to read the map correctly and not fall victim to momentary tensions between our two countries.” Then added, “I think it will be very hard for Turkey to jeopardize its world standing and discredit itself by becoming too actively aligned with the Iranian agenda.”³⁶

In Turkish newspapers, some commentators considered Peres’ statements as implying threats of military coups in Turkey. They pointed out the fact that some economic agreements signed by Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer were not signed with his counterpart, but with Turkish Defense Minister Vecdi Gönül!

Erdoğan’s visit to the US, on 5/11/2009, was another sign of the weakening Turkish relations with the Jewish lobby in the US, as Erdoğan did not meet any Jewish official during the visit. This was the first time since the beginning of the nineties that a high profile Turkish official does not meet with any of the Jewish pressure groups in the US. In the nineties, former Turkish President Turgut Özal had established this tradition and later all presidents and premiers followed in his footsteps.

Turkish daily *Milliyet* mentioned that these visits were not included because Erdoğan deemed them unbeneficial, especially that his meetings with Jewish groups in September 2009 at the sidelines of the UNGA were not friendly. These meetings also witnessed sharp discussions especially over Turkey’s stance towards GS, Israel and the cancellation of military drills with the latter.

Notwithstanding, on 18/12/2009, the annual commemoration of the Gaza attack, the first meeting between a Turkish high profile official and an Israeli counterpart took place. At the 2009 UN Climate Change Conference, in Copenhagen, Turkish President Abdullah Gül met his Israeli counterpart Shimon Peres and the official meeting continued along an hour. At the end of their official meeting, the Turkish president accepted President Peres's invitation to visit Israel.

2. The Palestinian Track

Statements like “Israel will drown in the tears of Gaza children,” “the offensive is a crime against humanity,” “History will be the judge of Israel,” “Gaza massacres are a black stain on the forehead of its perpetrators,” and “A great human tragedy has been going on in Gaza... We as Turkey could not possibly have adopted a ‘wait and see’ policy,” were only examples of the general Turkish official rhetoric mostly voiced by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. If we add to these expressions Turkish Minister of Justice Mehmet Ali Şahin's statement that Israel is the first instigator of world “terror,” the picture would be complete.

It may not be sufficient to quote these phrases to elaborate the emotional stance of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. His facial reactions and gestures as he uttered these phrases say what a written word cannot express. Since the first moment, he worked toward a ceasefire to stop the onslaught first, to open all crossing to GS, and hence send humanitarian aid. He even announced that he will convey the demands of Hamas—the organization labeled as “terrorist” in the eyes of so called international community—to the UN.³⁷

Turkey was enraged when the Israeli aggression on GS began, and Istanbul was the witness to one of the largest demonstrations in its history. Demonstrators shouted slogans “Death to Israel and America” and chanted calls for Turkish army to enter GS and defend it.

Despite his inability to walk, Necmettin Erbakan did not hesitate in addressing the crowds in a video-recorded speech, in which he said that he curses Israeli injustice. He also addressed America saying that if they loved Israel that much, they should grant them one of their states. Erbakan maintained that Palestinians are defending not only their country but the whole Muslim world.³⁸

Along the Independence Street in Istanbul, Turkish artists carried signs that read: “Every Land is Gaza, We are all Palestinians.” In Istanbul, also, thousands

gathered for demonstrations at Abdi İpekçi Arena cursing Israel and carrying banners that said “Israel is a Murderer, Freedom for Palestine” and “Prayer for Palestine, Death to Israel” while shoes were hurled at pictures of American President George W. Bush.³⁹

In a celebration at Antalya, on the evening of Sunday 4/1/2009, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan declared that the screams of those who were subject to injustice will not remain without a reaction. He added that what Israel does is the epitome of injustice and that we cannot stay as spectators.⁴⁰

The initiative also passed to Emine Erdoğan, Prime Minister’s wife, who called an emergency summit gathering first ladies at the beginning of January 2009 under the title of “Istanbul Meeting in Support of Gaza.” Her speech was touching, and her eyes filled with tears, against a large background image of the Palestinian head-cover (*Kufiyah*) as she spoke about the plight of Gaza, its people, women and children. Emine Erdoğan said, “Those who remain indifferent to the killings by saying, ‘Those who die here are Palestinians and Muslims,’ should question themselves and their own consciences.” and then added, “Let there be no doubt: The death of children is the death of innocence, and the death of innocence is the downfall of humanity.”⁴¹

From Istanbul, on Saturday 10/1/2009, a march of more than two thousand cars crossed Turkey and Syria, reaching the Golan borders to express their condemnation of the attack on GS and Israel’s criminal policies. The march was arranged by “*Dayanışma Vakfı*” or solidarity endowment, whose head, Hüsnü Kılıç stated that they head toward the land occupied by Israel in Golan under the slogan of “I, too, am there for Palestine.” He added that “we want to show the will of solidarity and resistance alongside our brothers and sisters in history, faith, and culture in Palestine.” The cars displayed Turkish and Palestinian flags.⁴²

Nobel Laureate in Literature, Orhan Pamuk, also made a significant stand on 17/1/2009. Although not naming GS, he said that the so called clash of civilizations only stands for the West killing more Muslims. Pamuk said in an interview to Japanese *Yomiuri Shimbun* daily that there is no clash between civilizations, there is only killing people. He said, also, that Europe is not a cultural ideal.⁴³

On 25/1/2009, “Youth Forum” organized in Istanbul “Extend Your Hands to Palestine Auction.” It had very deep implications and there was significant participation by a number of famous politicians, artists, and sports people

who offered some of their possessions for sale. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan—who vehemently slammed the attack—was the primary focus of the audience, where he offered his personal pen for sale, to be sold for a thousand dollars. A vase owned by former Parliament Speaker Bülent Arınç was also sold for nearly \$1,700, where Arınç personally attended the auction. Members of Parliament, ministers, actors and players from the main sports teams participated by offering their personal possessions like diaries, sports shirts, evening bags, suits, rings and necklaces.⁴⁴

Bülent Arınç said that he also organized a donation campaign inside the Parliament, and collected more than \$300 thousands from AKP parliamentary bloc.⁴⁵

On another occasion, Erdoğan reaffirmed that “we are always the voice of masses that have no voice and the home for those who have no home to belong to. This is our heritage that runs from Ottoman predecessors. There is something we should do, and we can’t go up the stage and watch from there all that’s going on.”⁴⁶

On 22–23/5/2009, a group of Turkish civil society organizations convened in Istanbul, in cooperation with other Islamic and Arab organizations, a conference to support the Palestinian people. The conference was headed by former Sudanese President Suwar al-Dahab. The attendees discussed during conference workshops ways to support the Palestinian people and break the GS siege. They adopted recommendations concerning Palestinian development, supporting Palestinian women and youth, stressing the urgency of lifting the siege on GS and opening the crossings, and spreading legal awareness concerning Palestinian rights as well the necessity of cooperation, solidarity and putting economic boycott into effect.

The conference also issued a number of documents; among the key ones was the “Islamic Document of Palestine” which confirmed that Palestine is the foremost issue for Muslims and it is an Islamic land. It pointed out the dangers Palestine is subjected to from the Israeli occupier. The document also stressed the right of return and compensation for refugees and migrants as well as Palestinian people’s right to resistance. In the conference also, Father Manuel Musallam, head of Gaza’s Roman Catholic community, made a call for Christians around the world. He reminded them of their duties toward the past and current situation in Palestine, and towards the decrease of the numbers of Christians there due to the oppressive occupation, he also warned against the vandalism at churches.⁴⁷

In the context of continued Turkish support for the Palestinian issue, The Palestine Platform and The Arab and International Commission to Build Gaza organized The First International Conference to Build Gaza, on 17–18/6/2009 in Istanbul. Erol Yazar, head of the Palestine Platform in Turkey and former head of the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen’s Association (MÜSİAD), said the “Gaza Reconstruction Commission has carried out feasibility works of 460 projects for Gaza’s reconstruction, prepared projects and is seeking support.” The conference aimed to bring together over 1,000 Turkish and international businessmen in order to actualize \$300 million in reconstruction projects to help war-torn Gaza. Within his participation in the conference, Yazar also said, “We are trying to bring civil society organizations together to solve humanitarian problems in Gaza,” Then, he added, “To date, things have been undertaken from primarily a political stance, and this takes time. But humanitarian needs are urgent. Humanitarian issues can’t wait for political problems to be resolved.”⁴⁸

Mahmud ‘Abbas Visit

Turkish media agreed that the Mahmud ‘Abbas, president of the PA, who visited Turkey on 7/2/2009 received loads of advice from Turkish leaders concerning how to deal with the coming stage. In the meeting between ‘Abbas and Turkish President Abdullah Gül, the latter stated that the Palestinian issue needs a unified Palestinian government. He added that Turkey does not interfere with internal Palestinian issues but the Palestinian issue requires unifying efforts and that is a Turkish priority.⁴⁹

The longest meeting was between ‘Abbas and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, which lasted three hours. Erdoğan affirmed to ‘Abbas the urgency of unifying the Palestinian lines, while ‘Abbas urged Turkey to resume its efforts as mediator between all sides of the conflict.

In the same thread, Turkish Parliament Speaker Köksal Toptan, during his meeting with ‘Abbas, said “ Hamas should be included in the ongoing process and it should also get involved in political responsibility. We’ve been worried that radical components in the region could get stronger if this is not done.”⁵⁰

Despite ‘Abbas’ requests for Turkish intervention, *Today’s Zaman* daily newspaper mentioned that “President Abbas was frank and open on one point: Turkey’s role in the Palestinian issue can be only in a role of assistance to Egypt.”

He said, “Turkey can help Egypt in convincing Hamas to declare a cease-fire and to be part of a national unity government.”⁵¹ He was speaking to a select group of Turkish and Arab journalists at a dinner on the second day of his official trip to Turkey. He explained that the recent declaration by an Arab League meeting of foreign ministers that Arabs didn’t want non-Arab actors to intervene in “their” issues had nothing to do with Turkey. “Don’t ask me which country they were speaking about, but it was not Turkey,” he said.⁵²

‘Abbas visit was not free of a protest march by dozens of members of the Özgür-Der organizations who gathered close to Istanbul municipal headquarters. Rıdvan Kaya, one of the organization leaders, said that Hamas was the original representative of Palestinian people and that Isma‘il Haniyyah should have been invited there. Kaya said that—after the end of his term as head of the PA—‘Abbas has no legal authority, he was a collaborator with Israel in their war crimes and hence, he cannot represent the Palestinian people.⁵³ Similarly, dozens of members of the Turkish Palestine Platform gathered in demonstrations at the Red Crescent Square (*Kızılay Meydanı*) in the Capital Ankara and chanted hostile slogans against Mahmud ‘Abbas.⁵⁴

3. Turkish Political Action

Turkish diplomacy started acting from the first moment to stop the attack on GS. Erdoğan’s visit to Arab capitals was followed by action from his advisor, Ahmet Davutoğlu who arrived in Cairo, on 10/1/2009, and met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Turkish sources mentioned that the Egyptian President is convinced that any ceasefire cannot succeed without Turkish participation.⁵⁵ Turkish President Abdullah Gül also contacted American President George W. Bush asking him to interfere for an immediate ceasefire in GS. Turkish efforts were remarkable in terms of attempting to prevent the exclusion of Hamas from the Palestinian and regional calculations. In a meeting with a number of journalists on 20/1/2009, Turkish Prime Minister’s foreign policy advisor Ahmet Davutoğlu explained the Turkish stance towards the developments in GS as follows:⁵⁶

- Turkish diplomacy intervened from the first moment of the attack on GS and played a key role in the ceasefire. It communicated with all the concerned parties, without exceptions, including Egypt, Mahmud ‘Abbas, Hamas, Israel, France and other European countries.

- Contrary to all other countries, Turkey was the only country who could communicate with Hamas and hence declaring two-sided ceasefire. Turkey did not exclude other players like Egypt and France. Rather Egypt itself wanted Turkey to guarantee Hamas' cooperation during ceasefire negotiations. Eventually, it was Turkey who guaranteed that Hamas accepts the ceasefire.
- This implies that Turkey was the country to fill the void, taking over silently and deeply the burden of explaining the Syrian and Hamas stances. It was not just a mail deliverer, but it actively convinced Hamas to take some stances.
- Turkey believes that Hamas must be part of the political process. This is closely related to the continuation of the ceasefire, and to the reconciliation between Mahmud 'Abbas and Hamas. Turkey is working on that and is at an equal distance from 'Abbas and Hamas.
- Turkey did not end all communications with Israel. Despite Erdoğan's sharp stances, Turkish Ambassador to Israel Feridun Sinirlioglu met with Ehud Olmert and other Israeli officials.
- Meanwhile, Turkish communications with Iran continued, with Turkish stances and action contributing to keeping Iran behind the stage and somewhat preserving its silence.
- Based on this picture, Turkish officials reject the notion of their bias toward Hamas, and allegations that they are distancing themselves from the West. They see these allegations as quite erroneous, and that relations with the West are firm and are not a topic for discussion according to Ahmet Davutoğlu.

Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Babacan rejected accusations that Turkey supports all the moves by Hamas explaining that it is an incorrect impression. He added that Ankara always advise Hamas that the solution is not with arms, and that a solution must be found within democratic frames. However, the search for a solution in Palestine cannot be without Hamas' support. He called for a Palestinian national unity government because considering 'Abbas the only representative to be addressed will not yield any results.

Concerning the Egyptian role, Turkish Minister Babacan said that Turkey is not in a competition with any one. According to him, they in fact told Egyptians that it does not matter who is at the forefront. What matters is a ceasefire, so let's work together. Egyptians said fine and a Hamas delegation arrived in Cairo following this. This was important as we succeeded in prompting a resumption of communications between Egypt and Hamas.⁵⁷



In mid July 2009, Turkish President Abdullah Gül received President ‘Abbas in a second visit. Significantly during the visit, Turkish President made a stance contradicting with decisions announced by The High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. The decision states that in the case of failing to reach a solution within a specific period of time, the EU would work on issuing a UN Security Council resolution declaring the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Gül commented on the situation, objecting to any resolution of this kind as long as it is not the result of coordination between key players. Such a resolution, he maintained, would be harmful in the absence of an agreement of this kind.⁵⁸ *Milliyet* newspaper viewed that Gül’s position was comforting to Israel but probably disturbing to ‘Abbas, albeit that these reactions were not declared.

Gül’s stance leaves the declarations of a Palestinian independent state to a stage not clearly viewed. This is contradictory—even if partially—with the Turkish stance from a case like Cyprus for example. Ankara views that if a solution was reached in the island by the end of 2009, each side much choose the path that suits them. Why does Ankara consider what is legitimate in Cyprus is illegitimate in Palestine?

The daily *Milliyet* newspaper also stated that Gül’s stance is not far from other examples in the region, drawing on the idea that the declaration of a Palestinian independent state may a pioneering model for the declaration of an independent Kurdish state. Ankara may be concerned about the likelihood of coordination between the US and the EU in the UN Security Council to declare an independent Kurdish state. In that light, Gül’s stance towards the declaration of an independent Palestinian state may have the goal of warning against a similar declaration elsewhere, and specifically in northern Iraq.⁵⁹

On 11/10/2009, Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ahmet Davutoğlu said that Israel should end the Gaza tragedy now, and should respect the religious and cultural sensitivity of some areas like *al-Aqsa* Mosque and East Jerusalem. Only then would Turkey be present for mediation between Syria and Israel. Davutoğlu reiterated that “should Israel respect these sensitivities, peace would be possible.”⁶⁰

Conclusions

The Turkish relations with Israel during 2009 can be summarized as follows:

The general course of relations was extremely negative, and relations witnessed intense deterioration on the official level as well as the public level. Turkish stance towards the Palestinian issue was based on principles. It combined several considerations; the lack of respect for the Turkish state by Ehud Olmert on the eve of the attack on GS, the ethical, humane and principled stands, and the Islamic tendencies of the AKP.

The mentioned Turkish stance was fixed along 2009. This is owing to the fact that Turkey placed changing and improving the situation in GS—a change that never happened—as a condition to changing Turkish stance towards Israel. Turkey also linked resuming its mediation between Israel on one side and Syria and the Palestinians on the other, with the same “Gaza Standard.” Turkey thinks the ball is in the Israeli court, and that had there existed an Israeli government that responded to the peace process, this tension wouldn’t have happened.

The tension in the Turkish-Israeli relations, however, will not much affect Turkey’s role as mediator in the peace process. Until the moment, Turkey remains the only country capable of playing that role—when Israel agrees on resuming it. Besides, Syria hasn’t accepted anyone other than Turkey as mediator; it refused any attempt for French mediation instead of Turkey.

Israeli attempts to create the impression that Turkish role as mediator is no longer valid can be seen in the light of putting pressure on Turkey. The reality is that Israel is ready to respond to any attempt at improving relations with Turkey. They would not wish to give up an alliance with a major Muslim country like Turkey, especially that it was the first Muslim country to recognize the Hebrew state in 1949.

The same applies to Turkish relations with the West that would not abandon Turkey; being a secular country, an ally to the West, and a NATO member, let alone its position as part of the security and stability formula in the Balkans and Caucasia. It is also another option for the alternative energy lines extending from Russia to Europe.

Apparently, the Turkish position is stronger than before, with the decreasing need for Israel and the Jewish lobby in the US, and especially following the signing of the historic agreement between Turkey and Armenia. The more Turkey solves its problems with neighboring countries, the less the need is for strong ties with Israel.

Yet in its turn, Turkey cannot go far in its tensions with Israel, since it's a member of the NATO and due to the Turkish aspirations to join the EU. As a result, Turkey must take this element into consideration while examining relations with Israel.

On another level, Turkey can never give up its solid stances regarding the Palestinian issue as it is entrenched in Turkish conscience. Defending GS and condemning Israeli attack gained the approval of all the sectors of Turkish society, the civil and military alike. At the same time, the Palestinian issue is a passport to all the Arab and Muslim world. However, Turkey supports solutions that require the recognition of Israel and putting an end to Hamas' firing of missiles at Israel. Turkey also views that Palestinian unity is a condition for solving the Palestinian issue and the schism crisis. Turkey affirms that without Hamas, there would be no solution for the Palestinian issue; especially that Hamas was democratically elected.

Third: Iran

Iran did not hesitate in declaring its support for Hamas and condemnation of the Israeli attack on the GS. Officials in Iran called on the OIC to "fulfill its historical duty of standing up to Israel."⁶¹ President Ahmadinejad contacted his Senegali counterpart President Abdoulaye Wade, chairman of 11th Islamic Summit Conference, "the two sides called on the Islamic countries to help prevent the Zionists from continuing their atrocity in Gaza. They also studied the ways to help the oppressed people of Gaza get out of the ongoing crisis."⁶²

Iranian stances were not limited to condemning the Israeli assault, but extended to criticizing Arab stances, especially Egypt, that denied entrance of aid material into the GS by refusing to open the Rafah crossing. Such Iranian stances caused tensions in the relations between the two countries along 2009, especially after the

end of the war and Iran's declaration of its desire to contribute to the reconstruction of GS and sending aid there. Iranian stances fell between declaring support for Hamas and condemning the Israeli assault on the one hand, and directing accusations and rebuke to Arab and Muslim countries on the other; in addition to a broad diplomatic activity by sending delegates to world countries to "discuss the situation in GS."⁶³

Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs Manouchehr Mottaki called on Islamic states to team up to pressure Israel to stop air strikes on Gaza, open all border crossings, and allow humanitarian aid into the besieged territory. He criticized the Arab countries, UN Security Council and the OIC, and said that "some regional countries have 'betrayed' Palestine."⁶⁴ Iran also declared its willingness to receive Palestinian casualties in Iranian hospitals in addition to establishing a field hospital on the Egyptian territories parallel near the GS. According to Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Hassan Qashqavi, Minister Mottaki has written a letter to his Egyptian counterpart Ahmad Abu al-Ghait "asking the Cairo government to allow Iran to establish a field hospital near the Gaza Strip." The letter also "asked for the cooperation of Egypt" in this concern.⁶⁵ "Now, we are awaiting Cairo's response to the letter," Qashqavi told a news briefing.⁶⁶ Evidently, such a call was not aimed at demonstrating Iranian desire to extend a hand of help only, but was probably meant to embarrass Egypt that was expected to decline such Iranian participation in "supporting Palestinians." This call came at a time when bilateral relations were facing rising tensions and when the Egyptian government, originally, did not support Hamas, its control over GS, and its war to defend the GS. Highlighting the "embarrassment" of Egypt in this respect were subsequent Iranian statements like those of Qashqavi's who urged the Egyptian government to act according to its responsibilities, its Muslim and human duties... and open the Rafah crossing... due to the depth of the tragedy, the circumstances that the oppressed Palestinian people suffer, and the longstanding history of men of high caliber like Abdel Nasser and Hassan al-Banna, as well as the geographic location and the existence of the Rafah Crossing.⁶⁷

In supporting Hamas, Iran's position went as far as affirming "that it is impossible to defeat or annihilate" in this war. Iranian Foreign Affairs Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said in a conversation over the phone with some of his European counterparts, he called Israel's ground attacks on GS a "strategic



mistake” and that Israel will never achieve its goal of eliminating Hamas because “Hamas is a nation and a nation cannot be eliminated.”⁶⁸

In the same context, Speaker of the Islamic Parliament of Iran Ali Larijani said that Gaza will become a “cemetery” for the Israeli troops.⁶⁹ He also said “Israelis’ behavior is worse than Nazis.”⁷⁰ On a diplomatic level, Mottaki telephoned his Turkish, Libyan, Japanese and Syrian counterparts and called for efforts to immediately halt the Israeli bloody war on Palestinians in GS.⁷¹ Larijani also discussed with Syrian President Bashar Assad “the serious situation,” while Saeed Jalili, Secretary of Iranian Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), had talks with Turkish officials around the developments in the situation in the GS. Iranian Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesman said that his country sent 22 members of the cabinet as special envoys to different countries to seek an “immediate halt” to the Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip and ending the “siege” on the coastal strip.⁷²

Iranian President Ahmadinejad did not hesitate in an interview on Aljazeera TV Channel, during the last week of the war, to call on Arab leaders to take on their historical responsibilities from human, national and Islamic standpoints because Gazans are firstly humans, secondly Arabs, and thirdly Muslims. And from a consideration that the primary duty of the Arab League is to defend the Palestinian people and work in light of the goals for which the league was established... and that it is expected from these leaders to cut all forms of ties with the Israel... and to threaten all those who provide Israel with political and military support of ending all relations with them.

Ahmadinejad made hints around his rejection of the calls that focus on the “Iranian danger” in the region. He asked the Arab leaders, why do you sometimes concern yourself with conflicts with some nations in the region that do not exist, and give them priority over the cause of confronting Israel? He added that it is a very sad matter that the governments of 22 Arab countries stand watching a corrupt gang of “Zionist criminals”...⁷³

Upon the end of the war on GS, and Israel’s failure to achieve the expected victory and extermination of Hamas, an international clamor called for preventing weapon provisions to Hamas, especially that it continued to launch missiles at Israeli settlements and cities along the 22 days of the war. Hence, the US and many European countries called for imposing a naval blockade on

GS to achieve that target. At the same time, the issue of international, Arab and Muslim participation in the reconstruction of GS was raised. The Iranian stances notably leaned toward the criticism of international stances on the one hand, and defending Palestinians' right to acquire arms on the other. Foreign Affairs Minister Manouchehr Mottaki stated that "For a government or a nation who would like to defend themselves, it is only natural that they would do their utmost to obtain weapons from whatever place possible." and that "These people [Gazans] have every right to stand against colonialists... they have a natural right to have access to weapons." He addressed the Americans by saying, "During this most recent savage attack against Gaza, you [the United States] offered 300 tons of bombs to the Zionist regime and now you have the audacity to come and say that the resistance should not have access to weapons?" Mottaki criticized Mahmud 'Abbas whose "term as PA president expired" and warned that "donations can not be given to the current Palestinian Authority government." He called for holding serious elections.⁷⁴

Regarding participation in the reconstruction of GS, Iranian authorities established the "Gaza Reconstruction Committee" that pledged to build and prepare one thousand houses, ten schools, and five mosques in addition to the reconstruction of a hospital, providing it with medical equipment. The committee also undertook the reconstruction of one of Gaza's universities besides providing the needed equipment, building 500 shops, in addition to securing aid to all families of the casualties and injured, and the needs of four thousand injury cases.⁷⁵ Iranian parliament also committed itself to the reconstruction of the PLC building which was completely destroyed during the Israeli war on the GS.⁷⁶

The war on GS ended and new policies were initiated in both Israel and Iran and the region in general. American President Barack Obama took office and started sending messages of dialogue to the Muslim world, with calls to solve unsettled problems including the Palestinian issue. Due to this policy, a sense of optimism prevailed in several Palestinian and Arab circles and some Arab analysts went as far as saying that: confronting the rising Iranian power can be achieved through an immediate ceasefire.⁷⁷ Others viewed that Obama's success in forging a Palestinian-Israeli settlement, and declaring a Palestinian sovereign state, will cut the road ahead of the Iranian agenda which is extending in the region under the pretext of supporting resistance against Israel.

Following the war of GS, Israel was preparing for new elections, and Iran, too, was on the threshold of new presidential elections. Meanwhile, the world was awaiting the results of elections in both countries to see which way the political wind is blowing in the region. Preparations to the election race, however, did not cut the chain of exchanged threats between Israel and Iran. Amos Gilad, head of the Defense Ministry's Diplomatic-Security Bureau, for instance, saw that "Iran is determined to pose an existential threat for Israel," and that Hizbullah was "turning Lebanon into a major threat for Israel because it has Iran's support." He added, "The goal is to create a balance of terror. Towards this end, what can be referred to as 'Hizbullahistan' is being established in Lebanon. This entity is based on a military wing—which is meant to assist Iran should Israel attack—and a rocket arsenal, which consists of some 40,000 projectiles."⁷⁸

On the other hand, the Iranians wanted to demonstrate their commitment toward the Palestinian issue, especially after some Palestinian and Arab voices loudly criticized Hamas and the "non-Arab" (Iranian) interference in the Palestinian issue. A conference was held in Tehran for supporting the GS. In his inaugural address, Iranian Supreme Leader (*Murshid*) Ali Khamenei launched a fierce attack on "those who advocated a 'pragmatic' approach" in the Middle East. Khamenei raised doubts about the statement "Palestine is an Arab problem" and said that "the new American president, who came to office with the slogan of bringing change in the policies of the Bush administration, avows unconditional commitment to Israel's security... It is a policy which amounts to the same crooked ways of the Bush administration and nothing else." In his speech, he described Israel as a "cancerous tumor."⁷⁹ Khamenei viewed that "the sole path of its deliverance is through resistance and fortitude," and added, "A big fallacy which has taken control of the minds of some persons concerning the problem of Palestine is that a country named Israel is a 60-year old reality with which one has to reconcile." Then he said, "Another big fallacy is to say that negotiation is the only means of deliverance for the Palestinian nation." The Iranian supreme leader also attacked the PA by saying that this "partial and fake authority was at times trampled underfoot by the Zionists under empty excuses," and stressed that the Palestinian issue "is the most urgent problem of the Islamic world," and that Hamas' "epical resistance... is the brightest page in Palestinian history of the last hundred years."⁸⁰

The Palestine support conference and the revolution leader's stances towards Palestine and his criticism of "pragmatic approach" were concurrent with warnings

by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Commander Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari. He confirmed that his country “has missiles with the range of 2,000 km (1,250 miles), and based on that all Israeli land including that regime’s nuclear facilities are in the range of our missile capabilities.”⁸¹

Meanwhile, Israeli elections resulted in the return of the Likud Party led by Netanyahu as the Prime Minister. After that, US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell started his trips to the Middle East to discuss the prospect of peace settlement including: resuming peace talks, the two-state solution, and the freezing of settlement building activities. A Palestinian belief in the new American administration’s ability—based on Obama’s stances and statements—to cause a breakthrough in the freezing settlement process spread. These optimistic beliefs soon withered, however, following American president’s “inability” to “convince” Netanyahu or force him to freeze settlement construction and thus make the resumption of peace talks possible. He was also unable to amass Arab support for this process and to isolate Iran from the Palestinian issue and supporting the resistance.

Iran, in turn, was getting ready for its presidential elections in June 2009. The world’s attention was steered in their direction to know how much was left of Ahmadinejad’s popularity and whether he was going to hold office facing a strong reformist opponent like Mir-Hossein Mousavi.

The West (the US and Europe) were hoping for reformist Mousavi’s victory over Ahmadinejad as they knew well Ahmadinejad’s stances and policies toward Israel and the peace settlement, and his extremism when it comes to his country’s nuclear program. In contrast, Mousavi’s stances were moderate concerning these issues, as expressed in his campaign for elections. In addition, the new American administration, where Obama called for extending hands for dialogue and diplomacy, needed a resembling hand in Iran that was definitely not the hand of Ahmadinejad.

Consequently, Ahmadinejad’s victory frustrated the expectations of Arabs and many world countries who hoped in a change in Iran. But the “elections crisis” that flared out soon after and then was taken to the street made way again for pressure on the regime and bets on changing its policies concerning the nuclear program and the peace settlement process in the region. It was remarkable that protestors and supporters of Mir-Hossein Mousavi and the reformist movement in Iran carried banners that contradicted with the core values of the Iranian regime



and its policies toward the Palestinian issue. In an interview with Al Arabiya News Channel on 11/6/2009, Mousavi's wife said that Ahmadinejad's foreign policy is the policy of chaos and he goes to befriend Latin America. While, Mir-Hossein Mousavi's foreign policy will raise the issues of peace and world peace and follow Iranian national interests. Our interests will have the priority, we do not wish to go into high-cost alliances... As for Palestine, Palestinian slogan is our slogan, too, but we will try to be friends with the whole world especially in the region, surrounding and neighboring countries. We don't want there to be rigidity and "terrorization..." we want to preserve our wealth for our people.⁸²

Demonstrators' slogans when they took to the streets on the day of *Ashura* (major festival commemorating the death of Imam Hussein) were blunter than Mousavi's wife's remarks on "the priority of national interests." They declared themselves free from the burden of resistance in Lebanon and Palestine saying "Not Gaza, not Lebanon—our life is for Iran."⁸³

Some pro-Iranian opposition blogs displayed posters where, instead of the Palestine map, a hand was held up in victory sign and wearing a green ribbon. There were calls for a slogan of "Death to the Dictator" instead of "Death to America," while other calls were for a slogan of "not eastern or western, an Iranian republic" instead of the past slogan of "Islamic Republic." Another blog suggested the substitution of images of Palestinian dead and children which were held on the same occasion with images of Mir-Hossein Mousavi, Khatami and Karroubi. Activists in the Green Mousavi Movement launched an electronic attack against Hamas and the source of funding of the Palestinian movement.⁸⁴

Reformist demonstrators' slogans were accompanied with rumors that strongly spread in the Iranian street, and also were circulated in Arab media, of the participation of Hamas and Hizbullah fighters in the suppression of demonstrations in Tehran. Thus, a link was made between the movement protesting the presidential elections and the Iranian regime on the one hand, and the refusal of the regime's continued support to the Hamas and Hizbullah movements, on the other hand. The question was raised in many circles around the negative impact of the incidents inside Iran on the resistance movements in Lebanon and Palestine. The Fatah Movement, for example, wondered what effect the incidents would have on Palestine, "on Hamas movement, and its position from these changes, and whether Mish'al will lose the bet and gasp to recognize Israel."⁸⁵

Iranian opposition action didn't come to a halt since the presidential elections in June 2009 until the end of the year, seizing every possible opportunity to take to the streets to demonstrate. The bet on a policy change toward the nuclear program, the Palestinian issue, the peace settlement process or the resistance movements did not continue at the same pace. Once again, the Iranian president and other regime's pillars reused the language of threat against any Israeli aggression, concurrently holding several military drills by the IRGC and the Iranian Army. Simultaneously, Israel began hinting at waging a war against Iran and its nuclear facilities, and to link in any war between Iran on one hand, and Hizbullah and Hamas on the other. *Haaretz* daily newspaper mentioned, for example, that Israel foresees the failure of the international community to stymie Iran's nuclear weapons program, and is preparing itself to launch a harsh offensive against Hizbullah in southern Lebanon or Hamas in the GS or both of them together. Israeli observers explained these speculations... due to the military trainings and the type of weapons developed in Israeli military industry.⁸⁶

The Jerusalem Post mentioned that:

The IDF [Israel Defense Forces] Operations Directorate has established a new department responsible for coordinating efforts to protect IDF bases... Hamas, Hizbullah, Syria and Iran all have the ability to fire missiles into our bases... During the Second Lebanon War in 2006 as well as Operation Cast Lead in the Gaza Strip earlier this year, Hizbullah and Hamas intentionally targeted IDF bases in the North and South.⁸⁷

In the same context, Israeli Prime Minister said that there are "three challenges to Israel's security that must be addressed to achieve our goal of a lasting peace. First, Iran must be prevented from developing a nuclear military capability. Second, a solution must be found to the threat of missile and rocket attacks. And third, Israel's right to defend itself must be preserved not only in principle but in practice."⁸⁸ Israel did not stop leaking information to several Western sources about its intention to attack Iran. Israel believed that the US doesn't want to get into a military confrontation with Iran. That's why Israel wants through military operation to disable the wings of Iran in Lebanon and GS.⁸⁹

The stances and statements made by Iran's political and military leaders were not altered concerning Israel and support for resistance movements vis-à-vis Israel despite the "presidential elections crisis" and the accompanying movement of



protests and demonstrations. As if this weren't enough, Iran also held military drills, testing rockets on 27/9/2009 and 22/11/2009 in context of preparation "to face any likely war against it" going by the rule of "escalation in return for escalation." One of these rockets is "Sejil" with a two thousand kilometer range, what places Israel and American bases in the Gulf within the range of this rocket.⁹⁰ At the same time, after the Iranian refusal of the Western conditions for proliferation outside Iranian territories, Iran, also, did not withdraw its nuclear program, or pause the testing of more developed equipment to speed up uranium enrichment. This means that Iranian leverage in the region has not receded, as some analysis proposed, after the presidential elections crisis. Nor did Iran back down from its fixed pillars of foreign policy. *The New York Times* newspaper, for example, assumed a link between the deadlock reached in the peace settlement process and US government's failure to impose a freezing of the settlement building activity on Netanyahu on the one hand, and the expanding Iranian weight against a diminishing role for Cairo and Riyadh on the other hand. The newspaper quoted Saudi and Egyptian officials and analysts saying that "Even while Iran has been focused on its domestic political crisis, and Syria has struggled with an economic and water crisis, their continued support for Hamas and Hizbullah has preserved for them a strong hand in matters like the formation of a new government in Lebanon and efforts to reconcile Palestinian factions." The newspaper mentioned that Saudi Arabia and Egypt "have been challenged by Iran, opposed by much smaller Arab neighbors, mocked by Syria and defied by influential nonstate groups like Hamas and Hizbullah."⁹¹

Undoubtedly, *The New York Times* conclusions are based on Egypt's "inability" to achieve reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas, especially after Hamas refused some conditions which they thought were not suitable for them. This situation delayed the understanding, embarrassed the Egyptian regime, and showed Hamas as having more control over the reconciliation track and the future of the situation in Palestine. Undoubtedly, such conclusion is also relevant to the strong position Hamas enjoyed following the Israeli offensive on GS, in 2008–2009, that placed them in charge of the GS. At the same time, some Israeli strategic reassessments admitted the failure in dealing with Hamas, as in The Reut Institute's May 2009 report: "Reassessment of Israeli-Palestinian Political Process: Build a Palestinian State in the West Bank." The report identified one of the dilemmas regarding the political process is how to deal with Hamas. "Hamas has succeeded in consolidating its control over Gaza and in gaining partial international recognition despite

Israel's attempts to impose an international boycott." The dilemmas created by this situation include the impossibility of finding an alternative to Hamas in GS. In addition, a ceasefire will allow "Hamas to build its strategic military capacities with Iranian support while continued fighting risks inevitable escalation."⁹²

The stalemate situation in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process and the hindrance of the Palestinian national reconciliation increased the accusations against Iran of exerting negative influence on the Palestinian issue. It must be noted that Iran declared its support of such reconciliation by Foreign Affairs Minister Manouchehr Mottaki who reiterated that "the Islamic Republic of Iran's [IRI] support to unity of different Palestinian groups is one of the permanent IRI strategic approaches."⁹³ In addition, during his visit to Cairo on 20/12/2009, the Speaker of the Islamic Parliament of Iran Ali Larijani declared his support of "Egypt's efforts to achieve such reconciliation." Despite all that, Fatah accused Iran of:

asking Hamas to freeze talks and create a heated atmosphere in the WB and GS. Iran also demanded Hizbullah to escalate the situation at the borders with Israel to distract it from a likely strike against Iran. Whereas, Saeed Jalili, Secretary of the Iranian SNSC, advised Hamas leaders and some Palestinian factions in Damascus not to sign the national reconciliation agreement.

Mahmud 'Abbas personally accused Iran of "obstructing Palestinian reconciliation."⁹⁴

The Goldstone Report, released at the beginning of October 2009, which the PA demanded delaying its discussion, contributed to a harsh condemnation campaign against the PA by several Arab and Islamic circles. According to some analysts, Israel is likely to employ such delay to enact a regional incident like launching an attack against Iran to burry this file and distract the global public opinion from its crimes and the Goldstone Report.⁹⁵ On the Israeli side, *Haaretz* newspaper saw that Iran and Hamas achieved by this report a huge victory beyond the political and promotional dimensions.⁹⁶ *Haaretz* political analyst Amos Harel said that Justice Richard Goldstone "effectively operated as an "unknowing agent" of Tehran. The practical significance of his report is that Israel is liable to wage its next war, against a more serious threat than the one posed by Hamas, with its arms and legs shackled." *Haaretz* established a link between the Goldstone Report and fears about similar reports in case Israel waged the next round, that will likely be "more intense than previous campaigns," thus it will lead Israeli officials into courts.⁹⁷

The Year 2009 came to an end, and no progress was seen in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process, nor in the freezing of settlement construction activity, and not even in resuming Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. The Palestinian national reconciliation was not achieved either, nor any essential progress in the Iranian file was made in regard to negotiations with the West around Iran's nuclear program; a progress that, according to some, was supposed to bring about a change in Iranian foreign policies. In a similar manner, the results of the Iranian presidential elections and the following crisis did not change Iran's stances toward Israel and its confronting resistance movements. This was clearly reflected in the visit by Khalid Mish'al, the head of Hamas political bureau, to Tehran, at the end of 2009, where the Iranian President assured him that the "Iranian nation and its government always back the resistance of the oppressed Palestinians."⁹⁸

The year 2009 ended and left for the new year the same old questions, possibilities and fears. Israel keeps beating the drums of war, threatening to wage it against Lebanon, Iran and GS, and planning a war that Israel believes will be a multi-front battle. There are some who believe, however, that what is Israel is doing is mere psychological war. Conversely, there are those who do not cancel out the scenarios of a war, especially against the GS, while there are attempts to choke and enclose it within steel walls here and there. This fact imposes precautions for a similar scenario at all levels, even if an Israeli return to such scenario is harder and more complicated than before. The referred to precautions imply amassing the broadest Arab and Muslim support against the policies of isolating GS, enclosing it and preventing it from acquiring weapons. This means evolving the Iranian-Palestinian relations and not restricting or retracting from it.

Fourth: Malaysia

Malaysian government exerted efforts to support the Palestinian people during 2009. It put pressure on the international community, by lobbying for a UNGA session to convene, in order to stop the Israeli Cast Lead operation against the Gazans. The then Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Bin Haji Ahmad Badawi called the UNGA more than once to convene. He also called for imposing sanctions on Israel, stating that "the international community should include outrageous breaches of basic moral standards in the list which must be subjected to international sanctions."⁹⁹

Moreover, Malaysian official interaction with the events of GS was remarkable, a scene that was not present in many Arab countries close and far from GS. On 12/1/2009, Malaysian Parliament held a special meeting to discuss the situation in GS, during which the MPs called on the UNGA to “establish an International Criminal Tribunal For Palestine to investigate and prosecute suspected Israeli war criminals.” During this session, Malaysian Prime Minister said that the Israeli attack is “a war crime in breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention 1949 Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.” The partial elections campaigns were put on hold in one of the Malaysian districts in order to unify efforts to support the Palestinian people, and stop the Israeli attack on GS.¹⁰⁰

On the public level, Malaysian organizations and parties arranged many activities in solidarity with the Palestinian people in the GS. On 10/1/2009, Aman Palestin society, and in cooperation with the Malaysian Muslim Solidarity (*Ikatan Muslimin Malaysia—ISMA*), organized a sweeping rally in Shah Alam city, the capital of Selangor state, where the speakers called for the necessary halt of “the barbarian Israeli attack” on GS, opening the crossings and breaking the siege on GS. They called on Egypt to open its borders with GS, facilitate the entrance of aids and doctors and help life go back to the normal in the GS. They also asked the Arab and Muslim countries to cut all relations with Israel, and work on putting Israeli officials on trial for charges of war crimes. Speaking to Aljazeera.net, Executive Chairman of *Aman Palestin* Abdullah Zaik Abdul Rahman expressed Malaysians’ deep empathy with the Palestinian people saying that “we are trying through the society and its activities to spread awareness among Malaysian people to do their duty toward our brothers and sisters in Palestine.” He also called Malaysian people to “continue holding activities and donating to support of the Palestinian people.”

In the same context, public action groups, parties, Islamic organizations, coalition of NGOs and doctors organized two separate marches, followed by a sit-in before the embassies of the US and Egypt. Commenting, MP Lo’Lo’ Mohd Ghazali said that “it is strange to have two sit-ins at the same time and for the same purpose, one in front of the American Embassy and another in front of the Egyptian Embassy.”¹⁰¹

The coalition of NGOs and associations organized a festival in solidarity with GS on 18/1/2009 where former Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad praised the role played by the Malaysian government to stop the Israeli attack on the GS,

and to prompt the international community to put Israeli government leaders on trial for war crime charges. Mahathir referred to the necessity of differentiating between the official stance that adopts the international position on the relations with the authority in Ramallah, and the attempts to reach unity between the Palestinians. Hence, “setting matters right and dealing with whoever truly represents the people.” Mahathir also commended “the legendary steadfastness of the Palestinian people in GS” saying that “a nation that makes such sacrifices, even if their leaders give up, they will not be conquered.” Former Prime Minister underscored the importance of putting the boycott into effect against all those who provide support to Israel. He affirmed the role of governments and nations in developing mechanisms to steer the boycott into effect in this war which he described as a “long term conflict.” He further described Israeli leaders as “a band of evil bloodthirsty murderers.”¹⁰²

Along 2009, Malaysia also witnessed a rise in public action that supports the Palestinian issue, and an increase in donation campaigns for needy Palestinians, with the Malaysian government adopting a more open policy towards Hamas.

Fifth: Indonesia

Indonesian public and official reactions, along 2009, reflected the deep commitment of the largest Muslim country to the Palestinian issue. This gives a clear indication of the possibility of taking the Palestinian issue back to its Islamic context that supports the historical rights in Palestine, and rejects normalization with Israel. During the Israeli aggression on the GS at the end of 2008, the Indonesian government expressed their condemnation of this offensive. Moreover, Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono delivered a written letter to the UN and the Security Council demanding the halt of the war of GS. Aidil Chandra Salim, the director for Middle East Affairs at the Foreign Ministry, confirmed that Indonesia will support the Palestinian people according to the UN resolutions 242 and 338. He also stressed that the Indonesian stance is fixed and has not changed with regards to refusing to establish any ties with the Israeli occupation until the achievement of Palestinian independence.¹⁰³ Indonesian Foreign Affairs Ministry went further in supporting the Palestinian people as a delegation from

the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Beirut, among them the embassy's Charge d' Affaires Anindita Harimurti Axioma, participated in a rally in solidarity with the GS organized by Hamas in the 'Ein al-Hillweh refugee camp in southern Lebanon. Axioma clearly expressed his country's full support for the Palestinian people and the resistance, saying that Indonesia has supported and still supports the resistance movement in Palestine, especially in international circles for the purpose of liberating Palestine.¹⁰⁴

The Indonesian government was truly harmonious with the Indonesian people, who saved no effort in showing their support for and sympathy with the Palestinian people in the GS. Tens of thousands of demonstrators marched the streets of Jakarta condemning the Israeli attack on the GS and the American support for Israel. Islamic associations and parties also organized daily demonstrations in the different Indonesian regions, waving flags and banners that call for lifting the injustice to Palestine, and opening the Egyptian borders to allow volunteers for the defense of GS.¹⁰⁵

In November 2009, the House Caucus for Palestine in the Indonesian Parliament launched a campaign in solidarity of the Palestinian people and defense of the holy *al-Aqsa* Mosque. Established in 2004 with the aim of highlighting Palestinian people's suffering under occupation, the Caucus organized a conference entitled "*Al-Aqsa* from Perspective of the International Human Rights Law." They sought to form an Indonesian-Palestinian parliamentary coalition that coordinates joint efforts to break the siege of GS, in cooperation with international MPs, by organizing sea voyages to GS. The Caucus also played a major role in solidarity with detained MPs in Israeli prisons. In addition, it stopped the Israeli Parliamentary delegation from participating in the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) conference, in Bali.¹⁰⁶

Many factors show the commitment of the Indonesian people to the Palestinian issue, and contribute, even if partially, to returning the Palestinian issue to its natural Islamic environment. These factors include the campaigns supporting Palestinian rights by parties and public organizations, the latter's refusal to cooperate with or establish economic and military normalization with Israel, and their demand of a greater role for the Indonesian parliament to expel Israel from IPU membership.

Sixth: Pakistan

Internal disturbances in Pakistan contributed to limit its ability for major action regarding the Palestinian issue on the official and public levels. Pakistani official reactions were limited to condemning the Israeli attacks on GS, as the Pakistani Foreign Affairs Ministry sent a message to the UN through its Permanent Representative to the UN Abdullah Hussain Haroon. The message expressed Pakistani leadership's condemnation of the repeated Israeli attacks on the GS, demanded ending the "violence" acts and avoiding more human and material losses, and urged the international community to hasten the process of a peaceful and just settlement of the Palestinian issue.¹⁰⁷

Despite being late to act, public action, as well as action by the parties and political and religious movements in Pakistan, came strong and effective by directing bitter criticism to the government that sufficed with condemning and rebuking the Israeli attacks. Qazi Hussain Ahmed, the then Amir (chief) of Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan which organized pro-Palestine demonstrations, criticized Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari for giving high honor award, the crescent of Pakistan, to the elected US Vice President Joe Biden saying that "Israel kills Palestinians with American weapons, and Pakistani rulers honor American officials without the least consideration for the Palestinians and their pains." Ahmed called for boycotting American goods, and urged his fellowmen to support the Gazans. At the same time, he criticized the position of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak vis-à-vis the Rafah crossing in view of an unbearable human condition. The Chief Coordinator and Information Secretary of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Ahsan Iqbal criticized, in a demonstration organized by his party to support GS, the government's negligence toward the Palestinian people, referring to the fact that Pakistan is a nuclear country that has the ability to act on the ground if it has the will to do so, and adding that it is a shame that President Zardari is now abandoning his responsibilities as he faces a real test.¹⁰⁸

Seventh: Commercial Exchange

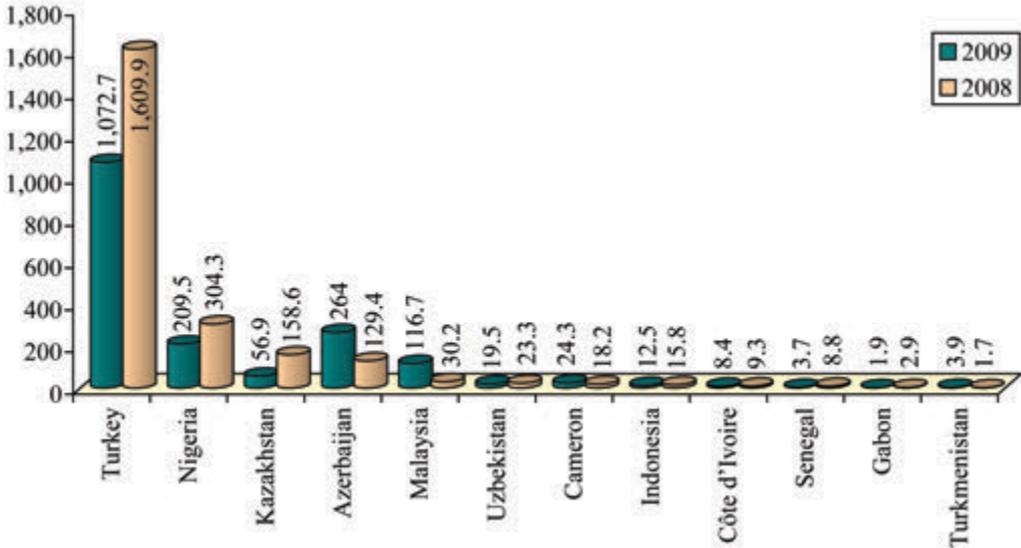
The year 2009 witnessed a significant fall in the volume of trade between non-Arab Muslim countries and Israel. Reviewing Israeli imports and exports figures for 2009 shows that Israeli exports to Turkey were estimated at \$1.07 billion,

recording a 33% decrease from 2008. It should be noted that the decline in Israeli exports to Turkey is higher than the overall decline in Israeli exports for 2009, which has fallen by 22% in comparison to 2008. Similarly, Israeli imports from Turkey retreated from around \$1.83 billion in 2008 to about \$1.39 billion in 2009 with a 24% drop. Ranking after Turkey in commercial ties with Israel are other Muslim countries like Azerbaijan, Nigeria, Malaysia and Indonesia, although at a lesser degree from Turkey (see table 1/4).

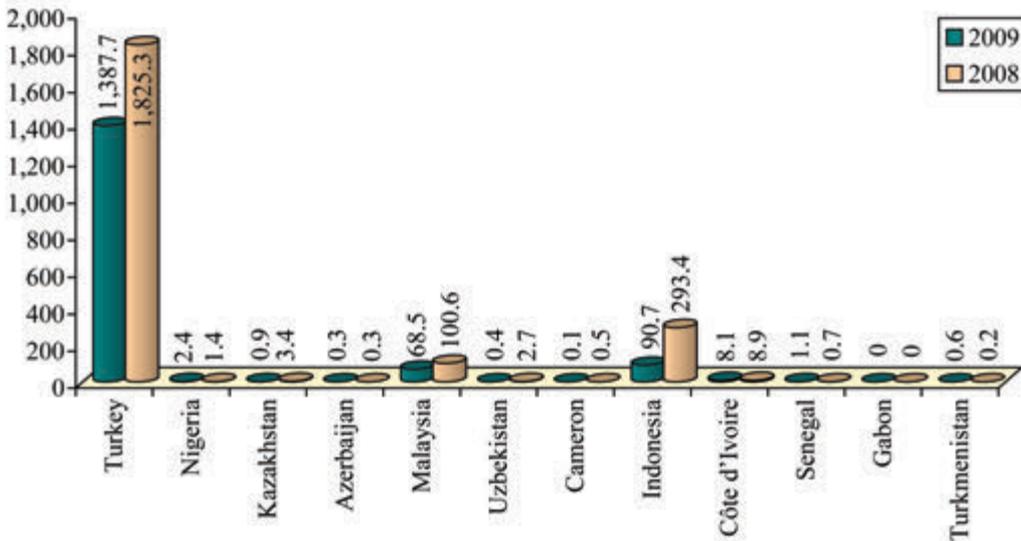
Table 1/4: Israeli Trade with a Number of Non-Arab Muslim Countries 2006–2009 (\$ million)¹⁰⁹

Countries	Israeli exports to:				Israeli imports from:			
	2009	2008	2007	2006	2009	2008	2007	2006
Turkey	1,072.7	1,609.9	1,195.8	821.2	1,387.7	1,825.3	1,606.9	1,272.7
Nigeria	209.5	304.3	205.1	78	2.4	1.4	0.2	0.2
Kazakhstan	56.9	158.6	99.6	64.3	0.9	3.4	3.3	2.2
Azerbaijan	264	129.4	82.6	28	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.6
Malaysia	116.7	30.2	70.4	68.1	68.5	100.6	63.6	53.7
Uzbekistan	19.5	23.3	25.6	12.2	0.4	2.7	2	1.2
Cameroon	24.3	18.2	8.9	13.6	0.1	0.5	0.2	0
Indonesia	12.5	15.8	17.6	12.9	90.7	293.4	89.3	87
Cote d'Ivoire	8.4	9.3	7.9	8.8	8.1	8.9	5	2.2
Senegal	3.7	8.8	7.1	5.8	1.1	0.7	0.6	0
Gabon	1.9	2.9	1.1	1.4	0	0	0.2	1.5
Turkmenistan	3.9	1.7	2.2	0.1	0.6	0.2	0.8	1

**Israeli Exports to a Number of Non-Arab Muslim Countries
2008–2009 (\$ million)**



**Israeli Imports from a Number of Non-Arab Muslim Countries
2008–2009 (\$ million)**



Conclusion

The year 2009 witnessed more Muslim sympathy and interaction with the Palestinian issue, especially during the Israeli attack on the GS. Public non-governmental action was more apparent and organized with regards to media and political mobilization and donations especially in Turkey, Iran, Indonesia, Pakistan, Malaysia... and others. This has been an indication of the centrality of the Palestinian issue in the hearts of Muslim world nations. Notwithstanding, the Palestinian state of strife cast its dark shades on the overall Muslim interaction with the issue.

The OIC, who failed to make significant achievement during 2009 concerning the Palestinian issue, continued to issue statements condemning the Israeli attacks on the Land and holy sites, and to call for lifting the siege. Apparently, it is difficult to find common grounds for effective action for Palestine among around 56 political regimes. These regimes carry many political, economic and ideological contradictions, as well as differences in interests and priorities, what leaves a very slim possibility for their movement as one mass.

As for Turkey, it has obviously, under the leadership of the AKP of Islamic backgrounds, started to practice a more independent policy from the US and the West, leaning eastward toward a more prominent role in the Arab and Muslim region. The Turkish leadership no longer felt its need for Israel after it lined up its regional ties, especially with Syria and Iran. Such disengagement, however, will be gradual due to the deep-rooted nature of the military and economic relations between the Turkey and Israel.

In Iran, the internal confusion resulting from the Iranian elections crisis had the effect of highlighting the desire of some reformist movements for more attention to the internal issues parallel to a less support for heated files in Palestine and other. Despite this, it is likely that, in the near future, Iranian support for Hamas and the resistance factions will continue, although it may be influenced by Tehran's economic conditions, its preoccupation with internal issues, and depending on how heated the situation is in Palestine itself.



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¹⁰⁸ Aljazeera.net, 12/1/2009, <http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/A4846AB5-BD17-43F8-86BD-1B2A2969F4E2.htm>

¹⁰⁹ Helen Brusilovsky, Summary of Israel's Foreign Trade by Country-2009.

Chapter Five

The Palestinian Issue and the International Situation

The Palestinian Issue and the International Situation

Introduction

A careful reading of the developments of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 2009 reveals that total failure characterizes the diplomatic efforts of all the local, regional and international parties seeking a peaceful settlement. What is meant by failure, it is the inability to achieve the expected results, i.e., achieving a just solution for the conflict, driving Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories, implementing the UN resolutions and stopping the suffering of the Palestinian people.

Although we will attempt in the coming pages to explore in detail the failure of the international efforts, we are merely pointing in this introduction to the main indicators of this failure.

There are two aspects for the first failure indicator. The first aspect is that the Palestinian political settlement icons have publicly acknowledged the “failure and barrenness” of the negotiations track. The second is that they made also acknowledgements that the international efforts in this field have reached the point of collapse.

Since this part deals only with the international dimension, rather than the local or regional one, it is necessary to point out that the first failure indicator is the result of a strategy adopted by Palestinian negotiators. Their strategy was based on the separation between the diplomatic efforts on the international level, and between strangling the resistance in the WB and the continued blockade on the GS. This has left the Palestinian negotiators without any effective pressure tools, as they depended totally on international promises made mainly by Washington. Moreover, the statements of the Quartet were particularly popular in the corridors of the PA.

The second failure indicator, in 2009, is represented by the botched public relations campaign led by the US President Barack Obama with the Islamic World—the peak of which was his speech at Cairo University. Indeed, the leniency of his stance towards “freezing” the settlement building is a practical indicator of the limited hopes hanging on transformations in US policy. This was made clear

when the US administration asked the Palestinian side to resume negotiations with the Israeli side, after it has realized that Palestinians are more likely to drop the condition of “settlement freeze” for the resumption of negotiations. Whereas the Israeli side did not show the slightest response to Obama’s request of “freezing the settlements.”

The International community is witnessing an era in which the US is at its weakest point, as compared to previous decades. This is due to the impact of economic, financial and military exhaustion which is starting to show as a result of the overstretch strategy¹—which had been warned about by the American historian Paul Kennedy in the mid 1980s. This exhaustion has worsened by the exhaustion and failure in Iraq and Afghanistan, the depletion of its energy in facing the resistance and opposition there, and by the inability to impose its vision of a new Middle East. Despite all mentioned, the Palestinian side in particular and the official Arab side in general, which bet on the settlement path, have “failed” to take advantage of this situation.

Indicators of this American exhaustion are revealed in the backtracking on the military option in dealing with the Iranian nuclear issue, the attempt to get closer “to a certain extent” to Syria, continuous call for Europe to further participate in the burden of NATO’s role in Afghanistan, and in the closure of the missile shield project in some Eastern European countries, not to mention the continuous resurgence of the Left in Latin America.

Although the European stance is seen as more advanced to some extent than the American one, the third failure indicator, in 2009, is represented by the disclosure of the limitations in the European positions resulting from disparities within the Union. This was reflected in the vote on the Goldstone Report, in the re-drafting of the Swedish project considering East Jerusalem as the capital of the proposed Palestinian state, and in the position towards talks with Hamas, not to mention the disproportion between the size of the European “financial support” and the level of influence on the diplomatic mobility in the region. This was explicitly acknowledged by Javier Solana.

The fourth failure indicator is represented by the inability to invest practically in the legal and moral value of the Goldstone Report. This Report summarized the investigations on war led by Israel against GS at the end of December 2008, for 22 days. A report that has found Israel guilty of “war crimes,” it also charged Hamas with the same accusation, though to a minor extent and less frequently.

With all the movements provoked by the report in the corridors of international organizations, as it will be shown later, its repercussions faced attempts of blockade by the major powers in the international regime. Whereas, the Palestinian failure in this aspect was no less important than its failure in all other aspects.

Failing to lift the siege of GS might be the fifth failure indicator. This failure is consolidated by the sixth indicator represented in the fact that the funds, the Palestinians were promised in Sharm el-Sheikh conference of March 2009, were not delivered to them.

If we add to all previous failure indicators the ongoing growth of the pragmatic trend on the one hand, and the mercantile trend on the other, as well as the growth of an independent, compromising, and competitive spirit, in the Chinese, Russian and Japanese policies; the main characteristic of the year 2009 becomes clear. It is the “failure and disappointment” of the Arab peace settlement forces in proving their premise on the possibility of relying on the international community to achieve concrete results in the negotiation process. The forces didn’t realize that the conciliation between parties in the conflict is not in any way isolated from the balance of power prevailing at the moment of conciliation. Negotiations are not the “art of arguing,” but that of investing the variables in the balances of powers of which the resistance, in all its forms, represents the backbone.

Also, with the Palestinian being permanently incapable of reaching internal reconciliation, and the continuing Arab retrogression towards narrow domestic level of politics, the features of failure are completed for the year 2009.

Based on the overall vision mentioned earlier, we will analyze the positions of the international community.

First: The Quartet

The statements released by the Quartet (UN, US, EU and Russian Federation) in 2009 reveal specific directions that are repeated in most of these statements. They are as follows:²

1. The establishment of two states, despite the reference to the relevant international resolutions, particularly the UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. It is also important to note that the statements do not explicitly refer to the borders of those two states.

2. The cessation of Israeli settlements in the WB territory including East Jerusalem, without stating the necessity to withdraw from the territories occupied in 1967.
3. The call for Arab states to normalize their relations with Israel, whereas the Quartet refuses to normalize its relation with Hamas. The former attempts to impose conditions in favor of Israel in dealing with the Palestinian national unity. The threat of blockade is used in case the Palestinian reconciliation is not achieved on the basis of recognizing the state of Israel, giving up on resistance, and abiding by the resolutions signed by the PLO.
4. Emphasizing that all Palestinian parties must comply with commitments made by the PLO. This means that the legitimacy of any Palestinian movement depends on its recognition of Israel.
5. The repeated calls for the release of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, without any reference to Palestinian prisoners. While this matter is carefully looked into by all diplomats who visit the region and meet with immediate concerned parties, the issue of Palestinian prisoners was not raised by any of those diplomats.

These trends become evident in the statement made by the Quartet in Trieste on 26/6/2009, which stressed the need to help the Palestinians in establishing their future state. It also stated that:³

1. The Quartet underscored the importance of fostering peaceful coexistence throughout the region through the conclusion of peace agreements between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon, in a manner that is mutually reinforcing with efforts to establish the state of Palestine, and through the full normalization of relations between all States based on the Arab Peace Initiative..... and called on Arab States to take steps to recognize Israel's rightful place in the region; to affirm that violence cannot achieve regional peace and security.
2. The United States briefed the Quartet on its intensive, ongoing discussions with all parties in the region to create the conditions for the prompt resumption and early conclusion of negotiations to resolve all permanent status issues, without preconditions. The Quartet affirmed that these negotiations must result in an end to all claims.
3. The Quartet urged the Government of Israel to freeze all settlement activity...; and to refrain from provocative actions in East Jerusalem, including home demolition and evictions.

4. Restoring Palestinian unity based on the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) commitments would be an important factor in this process, while facilitating reconstruction of Gaza and the organization of elections. [Tony Blair had visited GS in early March without meeting any of Hamas officials].
5. The Quartet called on those holding the abducted Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit to release him without delay.
6. The Quartet acknowledged progress made by the Palestinian Authority to reform the Palestinian security sector and called on the Palestinian Authority to continue to make every effort to improve law and order and to fight violent extremism, [especially in the WB].

The statement of the Quartet at its meeting in New York on 24/9/2009 confirmed the statement of Trieste. It supported also the meeting between Palestinian President Mahmud 'Abbas, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Barack Obama. It considered the meeting a significant indicator of the re-launching of negotiations on the basis of a comprehensive solution, in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338, 1397, 1515, 1850, and the Madrid principles.⁴ It also stated that:

- [1.] The Quartet reiterates that the only viable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an agreement that ends the occupation that began in 1967; resolves all permanent status issues as previously defined by the parties; and fulfils the aspirations of both parties for independent homelands through two States for two peoples.....
- [2.] The Quartet urges the Government of Israel to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth, and to refrain from provocative actions in East Jerusalem, and calls on the Palestinian Authority to continue to make every effort to improve law and order, to fight violent extremism and to end incitement. [As a reference to the armed resistance and popular mobilization].
- [3.] The Quartet welcomes the Palestinian Authority's plan for constructing the institutions of the Palestinian State within 24 months.
- [4.] The Quartet... calls for a solution that addresses Israel's legitimate security concerns, including an end to weapons smuggling into Gaza; promotes the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under the legitimate Palestinian Authority; and facilitates the opening of the crossings to allow for the unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza, consistent with United Nations Security Council resolution 1860 (2009)...



5. The Quartet reiterates its call for the immediate release of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit...
- [6. T]he Quartet urges regional Governments to support the resumption of bilateral negotiations, enter into a structured regional dialogue on issues of common concern and take steps towards normalization of relations across the region in the context of progress towards peace.⁵

It is important to be aware that the expression mentioned in the first point, “agreement that ends the occupation that began in 1967” is an expression open to interpretation that is different from the text “withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967” stated in the UN Security Council Resolution 242. The former links the withdrawal with the consent of Israel and not necessarily with an international resolution or with Palestinian rights.

Although the PA fulfilled its obligations, the “security-related” ones in particular, according to the Road Map and the pressures by the Quartet, the Israeli side failed to stop building settlements, home demolitions or Palestinian evictions.

Also, the Quartet statements call on the Palestinian and Arab side to negotiate and normalize relations, and end all forms of resistance as a preliminary step for the Israeli withdrawal. In addition, the boundaries of the withdrawal are to be agreed upon by the parties, this means making these boundaries subject to the balance of powers between the negotiators and submitting all previous resolutions, including resolution 242, to Israel’s direction; this is exactly the Israeli negotiation strategy.

In summary, the Quartet stance always followed those of the Americans and the Israelis, and thus, its role did not have any other influence than to put pressure on the Palestinian side.

Second: The United States of America

President Obama took office almost at the same period when ceasefire was declared, at the end of the Israeli offense on GS. Subsequently, the Sharm el-Sheikh conference was held, where participating states pledged around \$4.3 billion in aid for the Palestinians, in particular for the reconstruction of the GS and the US pledged \$900 million. It must be noted that the US ranks second in the list of donor states to the UNRWA.⁶

After two days of taking office as President of the US, Obama appointed George Mitchell as the US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace. Then, on 4/6/2009, he delivered his speech at Cairo University, where he spoke of the need to end the sufferings of the Palestinians and to establish a Palestinian state. It was considered by many a conciliatory speech addressed to the Muslim world.⁷

Then, his following series of statements asserted the need to freeze Israeli settlement building in the occupied territories and to establish a Palestinian state. In September 2009, he reiterated this issue when he addressed the UNGA. There, he said:

We continue to emphasize that America does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements... [T]he time has come to re-launch negotiations without preconditions that address the permanent status issues... And the goal is clear: ... a Jewish state of Israel, with true security for all Israelis; and a viable, independent Palestinian state with contiguous territory that ends the occupation that began in 1967.⁸

Obama's statements brought some kind of optimism within the Arab pro-peace camp, and extreme caution within the resistance forces. Whereas the Israeli public opinion was pessimistic about Obama's position, where only 6% of the Israelis see Obama as pro-Israeli compared to 88% for Bush.⁹ On the other hand, Europeans were the most optimistic regarding a change in US strategic trends after Obama.¹⁰ Javier Solana himself expressed optimism about the changes in US policy during his statement addressed to the European Parliament on the Middle East, where he said that "the conditions for Europeans and Americans to work together... are probably better than ever... I had good discussions with a number of people there in the Obama administration. I have the assurance from them that the strong commitment that has been expressed is a reality."¹¹

However, assessing the practical results of the American trends calls for considering the following observations:

- After taking office, Obama visited the Middle East twice. In April, the first visit was made to Iraq, and in June the second was made to some countries in the region including Egypt, where he addressed a speech to the Islamic world. This is in addition to meeting some officials from the region in Washington, including Palestinian President 'Abbas.

- Out of 16 international trips made by Hillary Clinton in 2009, four were made to the region in March, April, June and November. This means that 25% of her diplomatic activity was devoted to Middle Eastern affairs.
- In 2009, the US Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, George Mitchell, visited the region seven times: in January, February, April, June, July, September and October.

It must be noted that the aforementioned US visits did not include any visit to GS, with the exception of some visits by non-official American delegations or a few members of Congress, notably John Kerry, Chairman of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, who is said to have been given a letter from Hamas to Obama.¹² To assess these visits, we start with Secretary Clinton remarks upon meeting with Moroccan Foreign Minister Taïeb Fassi-Fihri in Marrakech on 2/11/2009; she said that:

In the same report [report to President Obama in October 2009], I praised President Abbas' leadership of the Palestinian Authority for their courage and the security measures on the West Bank. The steps being taken under President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayed are also unprecedented and we have never seen such effective security.... I told Prime Minister Netanyahu that these positive steps on the part of the Palestinians should be met by positive steps from Israel... Israel has done a few things in that regard.¹³

This discouraging view is consistent with Mitchell's statements who said that he had 700 days of failure in Northern Ireland before attaining the one day of success that was required. But Northern Ireland's two outside sponsors, Britain and Ireland, had given him their full backing.¹⁴ This suggests that he did not feel any cooperation with his efforts, especially on the part of the Israelis. This is what Clinton's aforementioned remarks reveal, which were also strengthened afterwards by Obama's remarks who said that the US was "not as honest as" it should be with its friend Israel.¹⁵

The US administration found no response on the Israeli side, especially in the issue concerning freezing settlements as reiterated by Obama several times. So, it caved in to Israel's position and turned its efforts towards the Palestinian side to compromise on its position (the Palestinians were not to return to negotiations with the Israeli side unless they stop all settlements including in East Jerusalem). In November 2009, Netanyahu had declared his willingness to freeze settlements for

10 months, with the exception of East Jerusalem and the settlement projects already approved. The US government rushed to welcome this position, considering it “a step in the right direction” and that it paves the way for the parties to resume negotiations. And perhaps this rapid change in the US position is consistent with the debate between the US and Israel, at the same period, on the existence of an agreement between both parties since 2003, that would tolerate the geographic expansion of settlements in the territories occupied in 1967.

In her speech on 31/10/2009, Clinton had supported Netanyahu’s request to resume peace negotiations with the Palestinians as early as possible, and without precondition. After her meeting with Netanyahu in Jerusalem, she said, “I want to see both sides begin as soon as possible in negotiations,” considering what Netanyahu “has offered in specifics of a restraint on the policy of settlements... is unprecedented.” She also added that what Netanyahu “is saying is historically accurate. There has never been a precondition. It’s always been an issue within the negotiations [the issue of settlement freeze].”¹⁶ This perception was reinforced by Mitchell who welcomed Netanyahu’s declaration of a partial 10 month freeze on construction in WB settlements, saying, “That’s a positive development,” and that this is the “first time ever an Israeli government” takes such steps. He added that “in negotiations, everyone has to be willing to give more than intended and receives less than expected.”¹⁷

A number of variables have had an obvious impact on the gradual erosion of the diplomatic momentum which Obama tried to create at the beginning of his term:

1. The first factor is that the US is convinced that the Arab side in general and the Palestinian side in particular do not possess any pressure cards. This is clear when the Arab side insisted on keeping the Arab Peace Initiative on the table. In addition, the PA has uprooted all resistance cells in the WB through an excessive coordination with the US and the Israeli security. This coordination became “so close that the American agency appears to be supervising the Palestinians’ work.”¹⁸ It is obvious in Clinton’s speech in Morocco and in the American media the strong support of the policies of ‘Abbas and Fayyad. There was an attempt also to promote economic growth in the WB with expectations that it would grow at 7% in 2009 according to the IMF.¹⁹ It is a policy which aims to incite the Palestinian citizens in the WB to a direct comparison with the situation in GS, to find a dual culture built on two dimensions: development and settlement vs. resistance and poverty.

It must be noted that this development is an illusion which depends on aids, and that the WB is torn apart by barriers, walls and settlements, and strangled by the occupation policies.

2. The second factor is that the issue of settlement freeze coincided with the issue of health care bill discussed in the Congress, an issue to which Obama gave much attention because of its great importance in the American public opinion. Obama needed the Jewish lobby and the Republican Party, particularly its neo-conservative wing, to pass the bill. This need has resulted in trying to appease those forces through a series of positions including the position on the Goldstone Report by refraining from voting for it, especially that the US House of Representatives condemned the report,²⁰ and the position on the need to freeze settlements and house demolitions in East Jerusalem which was the tacit acceptance of the Israeli position.

3. The third factor is the gradual transition of Obama's interest from the Palestinian cause to focus more on the issue of Afghanistan, particularly after the Taliban succeeded in escalating their military action and the Pakistani Taliban increased their activity momentum. In addition, there was an American desire to push European countries to further participate in the burden of the war in Afghanistan by increasing their contribution to the efforts of NATO there.

Bruce Riedel, who formerly served in the CIA's Tel Aviv station and later, was an analyst in the agency's research directorate and a member of US president Bill Clinton's National Security Council, stated that "the most important subject on the foreign affairs agenda of President Barack Obama's administration is the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan."²¹ However a European study even suggests that the Middle East ranked fifth among the seven priorities of the transatlantic relations,²² knowing that this was not the case at the beginning of Obama's term.

4. The fourth erosion factor comes from the fact that Israel failed to link between the advancement of the peace process in the Middle East and the persistence of the US in eradicating public and official resistance forces. This linkage is evident in the following:

- a. The continued US pressure on GS and on Hamas to recognize Israel. And despite the approval of Obama to grant \$20.3 million as emergency aid to GS,²³ the US government strongly rejected offers by Arab states that they assume responsibility for distribution of the funds.²⁴

This trend was evident in the speech of former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during the discussion on ceasefire in the UN Security Council, on 8/1/2009, when she said, “We must establish an international consensus that Gaza must never again be used as a launching pad for rockets against Israeli citizens.”²⁵ This was supported by the abstention of the US to vote for the ceasefire called for by the UN Security Council Resolution 1860 and to vote against the same resolution at the UNGA. In addition, the numbers of warships crossing the Suez Canal were increased, where some were bound for Iran while others were deployed to control smuggling into GS.

It is very plausible that the agreement which was signed by Condoleezza Rice and the then Israeli Foreign Minister Livni—in the presence of Obama’s advisers, just before he took office—aims, through some of its provisions, at tightening the siege on the Hamas government in GS.

Also, the estrangement between the US government and Hamas persisted despite the fact that some American factions called for dialogue with Hamas. Many US prominent personalities called also for such a dialogue, such as former Secretary of State James Baker and Richard Murphy. In addition, a study conducted by the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) of the US Army War College, recommended the importance of dialogue with Hamas.²⁶

- b. The continued US pressure on Hizbullah in various internal and external fields.
- c. The continued pressure on Iran over its nuclear program. The Israeli statements suggest that the peace process cannot progress in the specter of the evolving Iranian nuclear program, especially when a link is made between Hamas, Hizbullah and Syria. It must be noted that Obama renewed sanctions against Syria, in May 2009, along with Iran.

The psychological pressure made on Iran can be inferred by the number of warships which crossed the Suez Canal in the first 10 months of 2009. This number was 30% higher than that of the same period of 2008.²⁷ The joint American-Israeli military maneuvers, that were named Juniper Cobra, also were kind of a pressure on Iran.

This American trend is reinforced by the content of a document issued by the Israeli Foreign Ministry, detailing the ministry’s goals for 2010. It includes the following items:²⁸

1. Strengthening national security: a goal that is reiterated by European and American officials in particular.
2. Thwarting the Iranian threat: an issue on which leading powers agree, particularly Western powers.
3. The ministry will act to expand legal battles against NGOs that criticize Israel, this is due to the growing negative image, particularly in the West, of the Israeli policy. This is in addition to leading a “satellite” war against media channels which are accused of supporting “terrorism”; in that sense, the US Congress has issued a resolution against *al-Aqsa* TV and the Lebanese Communication Group/ al-Manar TV channels.

This means that the strategic analysis of the American position must take into account the link between the American stance towards Iran and the need to weaken it, on one hand, and the need to keep the balance of power in the Middle East asymmetrical in favor of Israel, on the other. This becomes evident in the US position on cancelling the missile shield project in order to draw Russia’s attention away from Iran and hence deepen the imbalance; this was conveyed by Obama to the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev.²⁹ Moreover, some Western press reports talked about a promise by the US to adopt a much tougher line with Iran over its alleged nuclear weapons program. The US, along with Britain and France, planned to push the UN Security Council to expand sanctions to include Iran’s oil and gas industry, a move that could cripple its economy. In return, the Israeli government was expected to agree to a partial freeze on the construction of settlements in the Middle East.³⁰ This imbalance is reinforced by the US military presence in Iraq which is supposed to be withdrawn in September 2010, leaving about 50 thousand American soldiers for training purposes.

It is important to look at the positions of former Middle East envoy and a State Department special adviser on the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia, Dennis Ross, on the issue of the Palestinian issue through one of his works issued in 2009, in which he concludes that:³¹

1. The US peace diplomacy in the Middle East does not achieve peace, but only prevents the situation from worsening.
2. The false myth of the idea that Israeli-Palestinian peace is the key to solving all the Middle East’s problems.
3. The false myth of holding a dialogue with Hamas or Hizbullah, in any form. This was reaffirmed by Hillary Clinton during the Sharm el-Sheikh

conference in March, who tied this issue to the necessity of the recognition of Israel by Hamas.

The US National Security Adviser in the Obama administration James Jones sees the situation from a different perspective than that of Ross. He sees that “two-state solution of the Palestinian question could do a great deal to diminish Iran’s threat” and that “in pursuing peace it is more effective for America to be involved directly in negotiations rather than leave parties to sort things out.”³²

This reflects an obvious inconsistency in the orientations of the US strategy decision makers in the Obama administration, which is closer to discrepancy in the case of the priority of the Palestinian issue. This leads to reluctant diplomatic action in any direction, and makes the situation open to many changes as a result of two factors:

1. The balance of powers within the US administration, particularly between the US Department of State on the one hand, and the Congress on the other; noting that Clinton, Ross, and the Jewish lobby are more in favor of Israel, than Obama, Mitchell, and the army who engage in more pragmatic and less hawkish policies.
2. The ability of the parties to the conflict, Israel and the Arab side, to produce an environment supportive of giving preference to a balance among the various forces within the administration in order to adopt one of the approaches. This condition is available to a much larger extent to the Israeli side than to the Arab or Palestinian side.

It is however necessary to point out that in the Arab-Palestinian conflict, the US government clearly enforces a strategy based on weakening the Palestinian side to the fullest extent. Then, in this condition, it urges the Palestinians to negotiate. Despite its declared support for the establishment of a Palestinian state, the US objected to Salam Fayyad’s unilateral state-building plan, when Ian Kelly, the spokesperson for the US State Department, declared that the creation of a Palestinian state “has to be achieved through negotiation between the two parties.”³³ On the other hand, Fayyad’s state-building process, with a special focus on economy and security, was welcomed in many American, European and Israeli quarters.

As for the Syrian file, the Israeli side sees that during Obama’s mandate, the US role must focus on the implementation of a strategic plan for a peace settlement with

Syria, to which the US will contribute. Uri Savir, who was head of the negotiation delegation with Syria, for the period 1995–1996, determined the outlines of this strategy as follows:³⁴

1. The final border must represent a compromise between the international border of 1923 and the 1967 lines (so as to put the Syrians away from Sea of Tiberias).
2. Insisting on demilitarization into the depths of Syria so tanks would need 48 hours to get to Israel, giving the latter enough time to mobilize its reserve troops.
3. Insisting that Syria distance itself from Iran, Hizbullah and Hamas.
4. The US would play a security role, giving Israel intelligence information and monitoring the security arrangement.
5. The US would perhaps station troops in the Golan Heights.
6. Israel needs to consider a defense pact with the US.
7. Syria has agreed to commercial and tourism ties. It is important that normalization include joint projects. It would be good to see the Golan become a special tourist area containing nature reserves and hotels accessible to Israelis.
8. It's important that water from Syria and Lebanon continue to flow into Israel, and joint desalination facilities should be planned for the three countries.

Thus, from the outset, Obama has laid down three priorities in his strategy:

1. Decisiveness in Afghanistan.
2. Opening the Pakistani front against the Pakistani Taliban and the Afghani Taliban.
3. Achieving peace settlement as this is in the interest of the US, in its policies vis-à-vis the Islamic countries (settlement would take the Palestinian card away from the hands of Iran, Hizbullah and the resistance factions). This was explicitly mentioned by David Petraeus and Michael Mullen. As a matter of fact, George Mitchell was specifically appointed for this purpose.

Mitchell was soon hit with Netanyahu's categorical rejection to freeze settlement building in return for re-launching the negotiations. It became clear to Obama that he cannot pressure Netanyahu into accepting Mitchell's plan, especially when he wanted his health care bill to pass, without hurdles from the powerful Jewish lobby in the US Congress.

Notably, Obama, his administration and his aides appear to be extremely weak when it comes to correctly assessing the situation. For instance, it has been proven that their calculations were incorrect when they pushed forward the Mitchell plan, and also when they drafted the new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Neither did they correctly assess Netanyahu's position, and their ability to put pressure on him if he refuses to comply. They did not even correctly assess Mahmud 'Abbas's situation when he raised the bar following their encouragement, by requiring a freeze on settlement building as a condition for resuming negotiations. When the Americans backtracked, and asked him to follow suit, they did not take into account his impasse in the wake of the Goldstone Report. After he falsely believed that the Mitchell plan will succeed, he raised the bar until backtracking became an extremely embarrassing option.

During 2010, the US continued to pressure the Palestinians, who agreed to conduct indirect talks with the Israelis, despite the incomplete Israeli moratorium of building settlements in the WB. Then the Palestinians agreed to move to direct talks under the same American pressure. However, on 26/9/2010, there was a major setback in negotiations, after Israel's decision to resume building settlements. The list of American incentives offered to Israel, in the midst of October 2010, failed to persuade the Israelis to renew the moratorium for three more months. This list comprised 20 F-35 joint strike fighter jets, providing a cover to the Israeli nuclear program, vetoing any initiative or draft resolution against Israel, tightening sanctions against Iran, and to stop pressuring Israel for any further moratorium after the expiration of the three months.

This situation reflected the American weakness in exerting any pressure on the Israelis. Israel benefited from the US midterm elections, the waning influence of President Obama and the Democrats, which also hardened the Israeli position. All of this, drove the US administration to announce that it had abandoned its efforts to persuade Israel to freeze building settlements. It called both Palestinian and Israeli parties to continue their communication with the US in an effort to narrow down the gaps between the two sides. Consequently, this led, by the end of 2010, to a wide frustration among Palestinians and Arabs, and to the halt of the peace process.



Third: The European Union

It is important to emphasize that there are two levels of analysis when it comes to the European foreign policy: there is the collective aspect as reflected by the statements issued by the European Commission (EC) or the EU presidency, and there is the individual level which betrays differences in the conduct of the European countries. This is evident in the stance regarding the issue of East Jerusalem or in supporting the decision of the United Nations HRC to dispatch an urgent, independent international fact-finding mission to investigate all the violations by Israel in GS, which some European countries voted to abstain such as France, Germany, Italy and UK. The same differences also appeared in the position towards the Goldstone Report, where some countries abstained from supporting it such as Britain, France and Belgium, while Italy, Hungary and Slovakia voted against it. This is in addition to the European stances regarding the war on GS, which was reflected by the reactions to the Czech statements in this regard.

The main positions of the EU in 2009 can be summed up in the following points:

1. The War on GS

France was the most active country attempting to arrange a ceasefire during the first few days of the war. However, the Israeli side was evasive in dealing with the French initiatives, prompting France to express its disappointment with Israel's rejection of a French initiative to end hostilities in GS in the beginning of 2009. This is despite the fact that France attempted to show balance between the two sides, by condemning both the Israeli ground attack on GS and the rockets fired by the Palestinian side against the settlements.³⁵

The European disappointment with the Israeli refusal to end its military operations, two weeks after the fighting had started, was evident in the EU's declaration. It declared that it will put on hold its plan for increasing the level of relations between EU and Israel, which was previously agreed upon between the two sides.³⁶

Although the EU endorsed the UN Security Council Resolution 1860, some European countries rushed to take further measures that tightened the siege on GS. For instance, a French frigate began its surveillance operations in international waters off GS, a week after the ceasefire was announced.³⁷ In addition, seven European countries, which are Germany, France, Italy, Britain, the Netherlands,

Norway and Denmark, in addition to the US and Canada, signed up to a program of action to combat arms flow to GS.³⁸

On 9/12/2009, a delegation from the European Parliament was refused entry to GS by Israeli authorities.³⁹ This incident was also repeated with the French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner, who was also denied access to the GS by the Israeli authorities, despite the fact that his visit was described by Solana as being “humanitarian in nature.”⁴⁰

Despite the repeated emphasis in the EU statements that it is gravely concerned by the humanitarian situation in GS, and the repeated calls for the immediate and unconditional opening of crossings and the implementation of the Agreement of Movement and Access of 2005,⁴¹ the EU does not adopt stances in this direction that are parallel to its practical and prompt positions aimed at controlling smuggling to GS. In fact, the Europeans were the third party in the GS Border Crossings Agreement signed by the PA and Israel on 15/11/2005. The Europeans’ role was to ensure the PA’s adherence to all the provisions of the agreement, to assist the PA technically and to train its members to run a professional customs checkpoint.

2. The Establishment of the Palestinian State

In Ramallah, in comments to the press, EU Higher Representative Solana underlined that the objective of the European Union “is to have a Palestinian state, the sooner the better. This state will be constructed on territory marked by the borders of 1967. It may be necessary to swap some territory, but this should not disturb the nature and continuity of the territory.”⁴²

In another statement, Solana said:

The mediator has to set the timetable too... After a fixed deadline, a UN Security Council resolution should proclaim the adoption of the two-state solution. This should include all the parameters of borders, refugees, Jerusalem and security arrangements. It would accept the Palestinian state as a full member of the UN, and set a calendar for implementation. It would mandate the resolution of other remaining territorial disputes and legitimise the end of claims.⁴³

To justify his proposal, Solana said, “Globalization and the demographic data in the region demand it [peace].” He insisted also that “Israel must place some of its eggs in the European basket, and not leave everything in the American

one.”⁴⁴ It seems that Solana’s position regarding the American role in the Middle East is derived from the European strategy that was adopted in 2003, which unequivocally stipulates that in a world of “global threats, global markets and global media, our security and prosperity increasingly depend on an effective multilateral system.”⁴⁵

However, the warning issued by the French Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Bernard Valero regarding the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state,⁴⁶ is part of the international approach that we have mentioned previously. Also, the statements of the Quartet, of which the EU is a member, asserted the same approach that the issue of the borders of a Palestinian state has to be achieved through negotiation between the two parties.

3. Jerusalem

In spite of the secret report submitted to the EU regarding the Israeli plans to annex East Jerusalem,⁴⁷ and the findings made by a European fact-finding mission in the territories occupied in 1967 in which Israel was held responsible for the plight of the Palestinians,⁴⁸ inconsistency emerged in the European positions. During the meetings of the EU foreign ministers, in December 2009, there were disagreements during the discussions of the Swedish paper. This paper stipulates that East Jerusalem is the capital of the State of Palestine, while the statement of the foreign ministers stated that the Council is “deeply concerned about the situation in East Jerusalem... it calls on all parties to refrain from provocative actions.... a way must be found through negotiations to resolve the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two states.”⁴⁹ Certainly, there is a fundamental difference between the Swedish and European wordings. While the Swedish paper defines the future status of East Jerusalem, the European paper leaves it, pending the outcome of the negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The latter is the same tactic favored by Israel, particularly when it is aware of the disproportionate balance of power between the two negotiating sides. The statement of British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs David Miliband, before the annual conference of the Labour Party (UK), came in line with the European stance. He said that “there would be no more historic achievement a re-elected Labour government to be the first country to open two Embassies in a shared Jerusalem, democratic Palestine and democratic Jewish Israel, living side by side in peace.”⁵⁰ However, the status of Jerusalem remain, like other issues, left to the negotiations between the two sides, as also reflected

by a European memorandum issued in February 2009,⁵¹ and as reiterated by the reformulation of the Swedish paper.

4. The Rejection of Settlement Construction

In June 2009, the EU issued a statement that said that the:

Council remains deeply concerned by settlement activities, house demolitions and evictions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including in East Jerusalem. The Council urges the government of Israel to immediately end settlement activities, including in East Jerusalem and including natural growth, and to dismantle all outposts erected since March 2001.⁵²

In response to Israel's announcement of its plan to demolish 90 homes in Jerusalem, the EU issued a statement which said: "The EU reminds Israel of its obligations under the Roadmap and international law. Demolition of houses in this sensitive area threatens the viability of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement... The EU urges the Israeli authorities to prevent the demolition of Palestinian houses in East Jerusalem."⁵³

Moreover, the then British Foreign Secretary Miliband said, "Settlements are illegal in our view and an obstacle to a peace settlement in the West Bank and East Jerusalem."⁵⁴ He was referring to the European position, cited above, on the settlements established since 2001.

5. The Dialogue with Hamas

Perhaps the most accurate explanation of the approach used by the European countries and the majority of other major powers in dealing with Hamas was the one given by Mahmud al-Zahhar, the Foreign Minister in the dismissed government. He said that "Europe is seeking to meet with Hamas in order to understand its position and not to hold negotiations with the movement."⁵⁵ In other words, Europe is keener on gathering information than on making a strategic shift in dealing with Hamas. This trend has increased in the wake of the war on GS, and some voices in the European diplomatic circles believe that dialogue with Hamas is necessary, even if the latter did not accept the conditions set forth by the Quartet,⁵⁶ in particular in what pertains to recognizing Israel.

However, not all European countries are on agreement with regard to this direction. At a time when several European nations have previously indicated their inclination to engage Hamas, the French Foreign Minister Kouchner

said that they are not talking to Hamas because according to him “they are not part of the peace process,”⁵⁷ in the sense that it does not recognize Israel. Actually, Solana stressed that the EU supported ‘Abbas definition of the Palestinian national unity government, which would see the light should the reconciliation efforts succeed, i.e., a unity government that “can be acceptable by everybody in the international community.”⁵⁸ This implies the exclusion of Hamas. In general, the calls to dialogue with Hamas did not rise to the point that a European country did carry out an official dialogue with it, or invite any delegation from Hamas to come visit; in other words, these calls did not get rise to the Russian level.

6. Financial Aid

The EU is the primary international source of financial aid to the Palestinians. Moreover, Europe ranked first in the list of international donors contributing to the UNRWA in 2008. In 2009, the European aid pledged in the Sharm el-Sheikh conference was as follows:

Table 1/5: European Financial Pledges for 2009, at the Sharm el-Sheikh Conference⁵⁹

Item	€ Million	\$ Million
Recurrent Expenditure	168	219.2
Development Projects	65	84.8
UNRWA	67	87.4
Humanitarian and Food Aid	61	79.6
Food Security	14.5	18.9
Food Facility	40.1	52.3
Instrument for Stability	15	19.6
EUBAM Rafah* & EUPOL COPPS**	6	7.8
None State Actors and Local Authorities in Development	2.4	3.1
European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights	0.9	1.2
Total	439.9	573.9

* EUBAM is the European Union Border Assistance Mission at the Rafah Crossing Point.

** EUPOL COPPS is the EU Police Co-ordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support.

The Palestino-Européen de Gestion et d' Aide Socio-Economique (PEGASE) which means the Palestinian-European Mechanism for Management of Socio-Economic Aid is the instrument to channel the assistance of both the EU member states and EC to the Palestinians. On the other hand, the 2009 Global Plan of the EC pledged €32 million to GS, €20 million to the WB and €6 million for the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. These will be channeled through the Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission (ECHO).⁶⁰

It is necessary to pause here at the issue of international aid, including the European aid. This is because in spite of the aid that was agreed upon in the international conference in Sharm el-Sheikh in March 2009 and other international conferences in the past, the adherence to previous agreements remained limited in scope. Thus, prompting Javier Solana to call on “all donors to fulfill their commitments of pledges.”⁶¹

The failure of these countries to adhere to their financial pledges cannot be possibly explained by financial reasons; rather, these countries link the size of aid and the dates of its delivery to the political conduct of the parties to which aid is to be sent.

Since the political authority in GS is a party that is “not in line” with the policies of the European countries, aid becomes a tool of applying political pressure in order to push it into changing its positions. On the other hand, the aid to the WB is used to entice the PA to make further concessions. It also, may be used to make it incapable of reconsidering its policies towards these countries.

At the individual level, the European countries adopted positions that are “relatively” in favor of Palestinian positions, at both the official and public levels. These include the following motions:

1. A Greek contribution of half a million euros to the UNRWA.⁶²
2. The British Trade Union Congress passed a resolution to boycott the products of Israeli settlements. In addition, the British Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) issued a voluntary guidance that says labels could give more precise information, like “Israeli settlement produce” or “Palestinian produce.”⁶³
3. Norway decided to pull all of its investments from the Israeli arms firm Elbit. The divestment was due to Elbit’s involvement in the construction of the WB Separation Wall. The decision was based on the recommendation of Norway’s Ministry of Finance council on ethics.⁶⁴

4. The Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Anders Johnsson called for the release of Palestinian parliamentarians being detained in Israeli prisons.⁶⁵
5. In Britain, the Westminster Magistrates' Court issued an arrest warrant for the Israeli former Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.⁶⁶ There were several calls for the prosecution of Israeli officials in Norway and Britain.⁶⁷
6. On 18/11/2009, during the visit of the French Foreign Minister Kouchner to Jerusalem, he signed the financing agreement for the rehabilitation of *al-Quds* Hospital in Gaza with Vice-President of the Palestinian Red Crescent 'Abdullah Sabri. During the same period, the German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle also visited Ramallah and Jerusalem.⁶⁸
7. Spain paid the salaries of 80 thousand civil servants and pensioners in the PA, which total €25 million.⁶⁹

On the public level, many European figures including parliamentarians and others flocked to GS as part of campaigns to lift the siege on GS and provide humanitarian aid. Among these was the Lifeline convoy led by the then British Member of Parliament George Galloway.⁷⁰ Also, there were many calls by prominent international and intellectual figures for dialogue with Hamas, such as the petition signed by 500 Dutch personalities and the open letter to the Quartet which was signed by 14 former peace negotiators.⁷¹ Also, a number of British Members of Parliament met with the head of Hamas political bureau, Khalid Mish'al.⁷²

Here, one must note the increasing show of solidarity with the Palestinian cause, and the deterioration of Israel's reputation in the eyes of the European public opinion, as evident from the many large protests against the Israeli aggression on GS.

It is true that Europe is united in its political stance on many issues. But when Europe expresses a unified position, this would be the result of a number of contradictory positions. As a result, Europe loses its ability to have an independent and distinguished course of action or stance.

Europe has forfeited its role in the peace process and handed it over completely to the US, which now alone manages and leads this process. For example, the Obama administration solely drafted, and then abandoned, the Mitchell proposal, before adopting Netanyahu's point of view regarding the

settlements and the negotiations. In other words, the US did not seek Europe's partnership, as is the case with the Iranian question. Europe accepted this situation, and marginalized its own role, despite the volume of its financial assistance to the PA. However, Europe, particularly France, remains vigilant for any opportunity that may allow it to play a more important role. For instance, France tried to replace Turkey in the Syrian-Israeli negotiations; France also took the initiative in what regards the relationship with Syria. However, France role fell significantly in last year, when compared to French policy during Jacques Chirac's presidency, and became more attached to the American position, and improved its relationship with Israel.

Hence, the European role cannot be relied on at present, a role that would otherwise establish a new balance in the region or in the peace process. Nonetheless, it must not be completely overlooked.

The policy that must be thus adopted, should take into account the extent of the strong bond between Europe and the US and Israel, but without closing the door to Europe's attempts to mediate, whether in coordination with the US or at the pure initiative of Europe.

Fourth: The Russian Federation

The failure of Russia in this regard was reflected in its inability to hold an international conference for the revival of the peace process in the Middle East, in Moscow in 2009, despite the Russian promotion of the idea. This is evident when Alexander Sultanov, the Russian Deputy Foreign Secretary and the Russian President's Envoy for Middle Eastern Affairs, discussed with the Palestinian ambassador the preparations for the international conference on the Middle East, which was to be held in Moscow in the first half of 2009,⁷³ but did not then take place. It appears that the Russian failure was not linked to Russian causes; rather it was caused by factors related to political developments in Palestine, Israel and the international scene, and the subsequent inability to organize a successful conference in such circumstances.

It seems that the Russian position has shifted in the issue of the Moscow Middle East conference. During a visit by the PA's Foreign Minister to Moscow in

December 2009, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that the Moscow conference will be held after the two sides agree to resume negotiations.⁷⁴

Moreover, the similitude between the strategic visions of Russia and those of Western countries, in certain aspects, is clear. As it is apparent through the underlying motives behind Russia's dialogue with Hamas, which are consistent with al-Zahhar's assessment mentioned above. This is also evident in Alexander Sultanov's statement, which clearly indicates that Russia would continue its dialogue with Hamas. He said that the only option in dealing with Hamas is dialog especially after restoring Palestinian unity on the basis of supporting the Arab peace initiative.⁷⁵

Although Russia was among the countries that supported an international probe into the Israeli violations during the war on GS, and supported the Goldstone Report, Russia did not affix a parallel effort to refer this issue to the UN Security Council.

The positive aspects of the Russian position during the year 2009 include some cooperation projects between Russia and the Palestinian side, such as the Russian Palestinian media cooperation project in early November 2009.⁷⁶ Russia also sent a team of pediatricians and four planes loaded with aid.⁷⁷ In addition, Russia closed the offices of the agencies that encourage Jewish emigration from Russia to Israel.⁷⁸

One of the prominent events for the Russian-Hamas relations was the meeting between the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev with Khalid Mish'al, the head of Hamas political bureau, in May 2010. In this meeting, which was arranged and attended by President Bashar Assad, Hamas was enabled to explain its own perspective of the events. Consequently, the better Russian understanding of Hamas vision was reflected in Medvedev's later statements. In the joint press conference between Medvedev and his Turkish counterpart Abdullah Gül, on 12/5/2010, Medvedev highlighted the ongoing human tragedy in the besieged GS, while urging the need for a solution to it. The Russians demanded the lift of the siege of GS after the Israelis attacked the Freedom Flotilla, on 31/5/2010. They continued to conduct systematic communications with Hamas during 2010. The latest meeting was on 12/12/2010, between, Deputy Russian Foreign Minister and Special Envoy for Middle Eastern Affairs, Alexander Sultanov and Khalid Mish'al.

In general, the Russian influence on the events concerning the Palestinian issue remains marginal if compared with that of the US.

Fifth: China

China's stance can be identified through the points made by the Permanent Representative of China to the UN Ambassador Zhang Yesui in his speech before the 64th session of the UNGA, on 1/12/2009. There, he said:⁷⁹

1. Regrettably, ... the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations continue to be bogged down in a stalemate... We always maintain that political negotiations are the only way out for the Middle East issue.
2. We are gravely concerned over the security and humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in Gaza..... The situation of the people in the West Bank and East Jerusalem also deserves our sympathy..... We support the request of the Palestinian people to restore their lawful rights as a nation and establish an independent sovereign state.
3. We call on Israel to stop construction of all settlements and separation walls, lift restrictions on the movement of the Palestinian people.
4. What is revealed by the report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission of the Human Rights Council is cause for concern. [This is consistent with China's support of the United Nations HRC to send a fact-finding mission to GS.]
5. We support the prospect of two states and two nations of Arabs and Jews living side by side in peace—a prospect that is achieved through negotiations on the basis of the relevant resolutions of the UN General Assembly and Security Council, the principle of 'land-for-peace,' and the Arab Peace Initiative.

However, the Chinese position hardly translates into practical actions to pressure the Israeli government to comply with international resolutions supported by the Chinese government. The Sino-Israeli relations are witnessing continuous improvement, where the volume of trade exchange between the two countries amounts to nearly \$4.6 billion.⁸⁰ This is while the Chinese-Arab relations do not engender any pressure on the Chinese government to put pressure on the Israeli side in turn, despite the fact that the volume of trade exchange between China and the Arab countries in 2008 reached \$132.8 billion, with an average annual growth of 38%.⁸¹

Although China did not cut communications with Hamas, the underlying motivations of these relations are not too different from the positions of the Western



countries, in particular those of the EU, in terms of enticing Hamas into getting onboard the peace process train. This was evident in the statements given by Sun Bigan, China's Special Envoy on the Middle East issue, who said, "The existence of Hamas is a fact. We do not agree with some of the policy claims advocated by Hamas and we have called on Hamas to proceed from the fundamental interests of the Palestinian people and join the Middle East peace process."⁸²

It is not expected that any development in the Chinese position will take place, unless the Chinese-American relations are to deteriorate. This may happen in the coming years, especially with China's growing economic and political weight, and its sense of greater confidence and ability to compete, and subsequently, to exert larger influence in the course of world events.

Sixth: Japan

On 31/3/2009, the Japanese Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Masahiko Shibayama identified the general framework of his country's strategy on the Palestinian issue, through the following points:⁸³

1. As a country which imports nearly 90% of its crude oil from the Middle East, the stability of the region is of vital importance to Japan.
2. We have no disillusion about our ability to mediate peace among direct parties... Since 1993, ... Japan has provided nearly one billion US dollars to Palestinian people, accounting for approximately 10% of the total international assistance to the Palestinians..., we are promoting not only economic assistance but also promoting political dialogue and confidence-building. Our 'Corridor for Peace and Prosperity' initiative is a project which tries to combine all of these efforts in one project. In connection with the reconstruction of Gaza, ... Japan announced that it would provide \$200 million in assistance for the Palestinians over the coming years.
3. Japan strongly supports the so-called two state solution. [Also, we] emphasize the importance of our cooperation with the Arab League... our Special Envoy for the Middle East, Dr. Tatsuo Arima, is attending the Arab League Summit in Doha as an observer for the sixth time.

In addition we note that Japan is among the members of the Advisory Commission of the UNRWA and contributes to it, albeit its contributions are

limited. Since 1953, the year Japan first provided aid to the UNRWA, and until 2009, Japan's contributions amounted to a total of more than \$550 million, i.e., an average of \$10 million annually. Japan thus occupied the 13th rank in the list of the UNRWA's donors in 2008. This means that Japan is focusing on the humanitarian angle more than the strategic aspects of this issue, which was confirmed by Japan's Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada, in his reference to the principle of "human security," one of the guiding principles of Japanese diplomacy, which he believes should be applied to the Palestinians.⁸⁴ However, this principle is based on purely pragmatic calculations, namely, the need to ensure the stability of the region to secure the flow of oil. Furthermore, Japan's commitment to this principle is not absolute, as evident from Japan's abstinence from supporting the United Nations HRC's decision to investigate Israeli violations during the war on GS.

Perhaps the most important Japanese political stances in 2009 were those expressed by the Foreign Ministry or by the special envoys of the government of Japan for the Middle East, such as Yutaka Iimura, who replaced Tatsuo Arima on 15/7/2009. Iimura visited the region in the period between 1–13/8/2009. He held meetings with Israeli and Palestinian officials where he appreciated Israel's acceptance of the two-state solution which the Roadmap of 2003 is based on. He also requested a freeze of the settlement activities and suspension of construction of housing for Jewish persons in East Jerusalem. He also expressed his concern about the displacement of two Palestinian families from East Jerusalem. Special Envoy Iimura confirmed Japan's intention to provide assistance to improve economic and social livelihood in Palestine. He also emphasized the importance of achieving Palestinian unity, and once again urged for efforts towards reforming the government structure and building a viable economy in Palestine.⁸⁵

Seventh: The United Nations

1. Security Council

On several occasions, the Security Council asked various parties to respect their commitments regarding civilians, condemning the attacks against the latter. Undoubtedly, the UN Security Council Resolution 1860 was one of the most important resolutions passed in 2009. This resolution was passed after some delay by the Americans who wanted to give Israel the longest possible time to achieve

its goals. However, the Israeli failure in the war on GS on the one hand, and the increasing international and public pressure as a result of the live images of the destruction and death in the GS on the other hand, pushed the UN Security Council to convene. On 8/1/2009, resolution 1860 (2009) was adopted by 14 in favour, with the US abstaining. It stated that the UN Security Council:⁸⁶

- a. *Stresses* the urgency of and *calls for* an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza;
- b. *Calls for* the unimpeded provision and distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian assistance, including of food, fuel and medical treatment;
- c. *Condemns* all violence and hostilities directed against civilians and all acts of terrorism;
- d. *Calls upon* Member States to intensify efforts to provide arrangements and guarantees in Gaza in order to sustain a durable ceasefire and calm, including to prevent illicit trafficking in arms and ammunition and to ensure the sustained re-opening of the crossing points on the basis of the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access between the Palestinian Authority and Israel.
- e. *Welcomes* the Quartet's consideration, in consultation with the parties, of an international meeting in Moscow in 2009; [This means that the Israeli side in particular has the right to obstruct the preparations for the meeting, should it feel that the latter will exert pressure on Israel.]
- f. *Encourages* tangible steps towards intra-Palestinian reconciliation including in support of mediation efforts of Egypt and the League of Arab States.

2. General Assembly

The General Assembly began its sessions in 2009 by declaring its support for UN Security Council Resolution 1860 with a majority of 143 countries. However, the most important motions by the assembly included its adoption, on 5/11/2009, of the follow-up to the report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict. The UNGA endorsed the report and requested the secretary-general to transmit it to the UN Security Council. The UNGA also, called upon Israel and the Palestinian side to undertake investigations that are independent, credible and in conformity with international standards into the serious violations of international humanitarian and international human rights law reported by the Fact-Finding Mission.⁸⁷

On 13/11/2009, the General Assembly, through the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, stressed that it:⁸⁸

- a. "Reaffirms that the Israeli settlements in the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and in the occupied Syrian Golan are illegal and an obstacle to peace. While noting that the International Court of Justice concluded that 'the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (including East Jerusalem) have been established in breach of international law.'" ⁸⁹
- b. "Reaffirms that the Palestine refugees are entitled to their property and to the income derived therefrom... [and] requests the Secretary-General to take all appropriate steps... for the protection of Arab property, assets and property rights in Israel."

It is noteworthy in this regard to mention that the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's has stressed that the Palestinians have the right of return to the land they left in 1948.⁹⁰

- c. "Affirms the necessity for the continuation of the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the importance of its unimpeded operation and its provision of services."⁹¹
- d. "Commends the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories for its efforts in performing the tasks assigned to it by the General Assembly and for its impartiality."⁹²

Following the destruction of several of its facilities in the GS, UNRWA appealed for urgent aid amounting to \$456.7 million, in addition to \$370.7 million for the refugees in Lebanon. This is while the estimated amount needed by the UNRWA in 2009 is \$550 million, of which only \$510 million were available. The UN called on the international community to provide \$664.4 million for funding more than 230 projects in the Palestinian territories, especially when 80% of the Palestinians in Gaza were living off of international aid.⁹³

A fierce media battle between the UNRWA and Israel ensued, regarding the Israeli army's strikes against the agency's facilities, and blocking food aid and construction material intended for UNRWA, in addition to the Israeli forces' use of white phosphorus. This came in conjunction with strong statements issued by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in this regard.⁹⁴

3. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

The council passed a number of resolutions on 28/7/2009 and 31/7/2009, in which it:

- a. Calls for the lifting of all mobility restrictions imposed on the Palestinian people, ... and for other urgent measures to be taken to alleviate the desperate humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, especially in the GS.
- b. Stresses the need to preserve the national unity and the territorial integrity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.⁹⁵
- c. Urges the international community to continue to give special attention to the promotion and protection of the human rights of Palestinian women and girls... and demands that Israel, the occupying Power, comply fully with the provisions and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).⁹⁶

4. The Goldstone Report

Since the UN Security Council passed resolution 1860, there have been increasing calls for investigating the human rights violations during the war on the GS, which then culminated in the HRC's approval on 12/1/2009 to send a fact-finding mission to GS, a decision endorsed by 33 countries including China and Russia.

Accordingly, and in light of what the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied since 1967, Richard Falk said that "Israel is committing a shocking series of atrocities by using modern weaponry against a defenceless population,"⁹⁷ the President of the HRC established the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict on 3/4/2009. The mission's objective was "to investigate all violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law that might have been committed at any time in the context of the military operations that were conducted in Gaza during the period from 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009, whether before, during or after."⁹⁸

The former judge of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, and the former Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the Jewish Judge Richard Goldstone was chosen as the head of the mission. Alongside Goldstone, there were three other mission members:

1. Professor Christine Chinkin, professor of International Law at the London School of Economics and Political Science, who was a member of the high-level fact-finding mission to Beit Hanoun.
2. Ms. Hina Jilani, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and former Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders, who was a member of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur Hina Jilani.
3. Colonel Desmond Travers, a former officer in the Irish Armed Forces and member of the Board of Directors of the Institute for International Criminal Investigations.

This means that the mission included high caliber expertise in the field of investigations, while it is difficult for Israel to accuse it of bias, especially when considering its members' ethnic or religious backgrounds. In spite all of that, Israel refused to cooperate with the mission, while the Palestinian authorities in both the WB and GS have cooperated with it.

The mission's report focused on the period between 19/6/2008 to 31/7/2009. It investigated 36 incidents, information were gathered from various sources through interviews with victims, witnesses and other persons having relevant information and there were site visits where incidents had occurred. In addition, analyses were conducted to video and photographic images, including satellite imagery. Medical reports about injuries to victims were reviewed. The data that was collected was massive, and included 10 thousand pages, 30 videos, 1,200 photographs, where the mission conducted 188 individual interviews, reviewed more than 300 reports and held 38 public testimonies.

The mission noted that in almost all of the cases it has also been able to determine whether or not it appears that the acts in question were done deliberately or recklessly or in the knowledge that the consequence that resulted would result in the ordinary course of events. It has thus referred in many cases to the relevant fault element (*mens rea*). The Mission fully appreciated the importance of the presumption of innocence. The findings did not attempt to identify the individuals responsible for the commission of offences nor did they pretend to reach the standard of proof applicable in criminal trials.

However, the mission rejected the Israeli justification for the strikes against the PLC and the Gaza main prison, and found that the attacks on these buildings

constituted “deliberate attacks on civilian objects.” The mission also concluded that the policemen killed in the Israeli strikes in the first day of attack, on 27/12/2008, “cannot be said to have been taking a direct part in hostilities and thus did not lose their civilian immunity.” However, the mission accepted that “there may be individual members of the Gaza police that were at the same time members of Palestinian armed groups and thus combatants.”

In most parts, the mission’s report dealt with Israeli violations, and some of its paragraphs were devoted to the Palestinian resistance factions.

a. Israel

According to the report, the Mission found that:

1. The Israeli armed forces were systematically reckless in determining the use of white phosphorous in built-up areas.

2. There was an Israeli deliberate and systematic policy to target industrial sites such as food and drink factories, water installations such as the water wells complex and the wall of one of the raw sewage lagoons of the Gaza wastewater treatment plant, in addition to the only flour mill in the GS that was still operating and chicken farms. Thus, it considered this destruction a violation of customary international law and may constitute a war crime, and that the strikes constitute a violation of the right to adequate food and means of subsistence.

3. Palestinian civilians were used as human shields, and this practice is prohibited by international humanitarian law. There were “intentional attacks against the civilian population and civilian objects.” The report also criticizes the precautionary measures taken by Israel to protect the civilians, as they were completely ineffective. The mission found that there were violations of the prohibition of attacks on civilian hospitals, and the direct targeting and arbitrary killing of Palestinian civilians is a violation of the right to life and it had no justifiable military objective.

4. The humiliating and degrading treatment of civilians is “contrary to fundamental principles of international humanitarian law and human rights law.” These acts are also “grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and constitute a war crime.” Moreover, the conduct of the Israeli armed forces “constitute grave

breaches of the Fourth Geneva Convention in respect of willful killings and willfully causing great suffering to protected persons, and as such give rise to individual criminal responsibility.”

5. The Israeli attacks on UN depots “over several hours” in spite of the fact that the Israeli forces have been fully alerted were “extremely dangerous.” The Israeli forces “violated the requirement under customary international law to take all feasible precautions.”

6. The credibility of Israel’s position has been damaged by the series of inconsistencies, contradictions and factual inaccuracies in the statements justifying the attack. Moreover, the Israeli system of investigation does not “comply with standards of impartiality, independence, promptness and effectiveness.” The Israeli system also “presents inherently discriminatory features that make the pursuit of justice for Palestinian victims very difficult.”

Therefore, based on the facts available to the Mission, it is of the view that “some of the actions of the Government of Israel might justify a competent court finding that crimes against humanity have been committed.”

b. The Palestinian Resistance Factions

The most important paragraphs that focused on the Palestinian resistance factions can be summed up as follows:

1. The “Palestinian armed groups were present in urban areas during the military operations and launched rockets from urban areas. It may be that the Palestinian combatants did not at all times adequately distinguish themselves from the civilian population.” The Mission found no evidence, however, to suggest that Palestinian armed groups “directed civilians to areas where attacks were being launched or that they forced civilians to remain within the vicinity of the attacks.”

2. The Mission did not establish the use of mosques for military purposes, but “it cannot exclude that this might have occurred in other cases.” No evidence was found to support the allegations that hospital facilities and ambulances were used for military purposes. Furthermore, the Palestinian armed groups did not engage “in combat activities from UN facilities.” The Mission cannot, however, discount the

possibility “that Palestinian armed groups were active in the vicinity of such United Nations facilities and hospitals.” In addition, it must be noted that the “Palestinian armed groups, where they launched attacks close to civilian or protected buildings, unnecessarily exposed the civilian population of Gaza to danger.”

3. Some of the report’s paragraphs included references to Hamas’s policies towards other Palestinian factions in the GS, and to the policies of the PA in the WB towards political organizations. The report noted the following:

- “The Mission obtained information about violence against political opponents by the security services that report to the Gaza authorities,” which included killings. Such actions “constitute serious violations of human rights.” In addition, the detention of members of the PLC may amount to “collective punishment contrary to international humanitarian law.”
- The rockets and mortars that were launched into a civilian population constitute a deliberate attack against a civilian population. These acts “would constitute war crimes and may amount to crimes against humanity. The Mission finds that there is significant evidence to suggest that one of the primary purposes of the rocket and mortar attacks is to spread terror among the Israeli civilian population, a violation of international law.” It is hence necessary to conduct investigation and, if appropriate, prosecutions of those suspected of serious violations.
- The violations perpetrated by the Palestinian security authorities in the WB, including unlawful arrests, torture, arbitrary closure of charities, are measures that are inconsistent with the PA’s obligations deriving from the UDHR.

The report encountered some hurdles during the vote. It was requested that the vote be delayed. However, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories Occupied since 1967 said that it was the PA that was behind the delay, and he said:

This was a moment when finally the international community endorsed the allegations of war crimes, and it would have been an opportunity to vindicate the struggle of the Palestinian people for their rights under international law. And for the Palestinians’ representatives in the UN, themselves, to seem to undermine this report is an astonishing development.⁹⁹

Eighth: International Non-Governmental Organizations

Amnesty International has been one of the most prominent non-governmental organizations to voice sharp criticism against Israel. It criticized the latter's violations of human rights in the occupied territories, and the use of certain weapons in the war on GS such as white phosphorous, in addition to the blockade on GS that Israel continues to impose.

Amnesty International USA asked the US to cease military transfers to Israel. It said that all parties to the conflict, Israel and Palestinian armed groups such as Hamas, should cease attacks on civilians.¹⁰⁰

Ninth: The Regional Powers

The document issued by the Israeli Foreign Ministry, detailing the ministry's goals for 2010 included strengthening bilateral diplomacy with a view to improve ties with new major powers such as Brazil, the countries of Latin America and Africa, in addition to Russia and China, instead of continuing to focus on relations with the Arab countries.

In addition to the above, India also, emerges as one of the important countries in the crosshairs of Israeli strategy, particularly in what regards military cooperation. Despite India's financial assistance to GS, \$1 million, and India's condemnation of the aggression on GS that was expressed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh,¹⁰¹ its military cooperation with Israel continued, such as India's purchase of surveillance planes from Israel.¹⁰²

In Latin America, where there is growing influence by leftist factions, and where many countries' ties with Iran and Syria have improved dramatically, a distinguished role for Venezuelan policy has emerged. For instance, the Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez expelled Israel's ambassador from Caracas and criticized the war on GS labeling it the "holocaust" of the Palestinian people, and accused Israel of being the "murder arm" of the United States. In addition, and the diplomatic ties between the two countries were severed. In contrast, Venezuela elevated its relations with the PA to full diplomatic status, and provided 80 tons of humanitarian aid to GS.¹⁰³

In addition, Bolivia took strong stances against Israel, as expressed no less vehemently by the Bolivian President Evo Morales.

Brazil, as one of the most important countries of Latin America, attracted significant diplomatic activity from the Middle East. In November 2009, it was visited by the Israeli President Shimon Peres, to whom the Brazilian president Lula Da Silva proposed to mediate between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Da Silva stressed the need for dialogue with Hamas, as “there will be no peace without political concessions.” Peres also, met with the Director of Petrobras, the Brazilian national oil company.¹⁰⁴ Brazil also hosted in that month President ‘Abbas and the Iranian President Ahmadinejad.¹⁰⁵ In addition, Da Silva called for the Quartet to be expanded to include countries such as Brazil and South Africa.

In Africa, where Israeli diplomatic and intelligence efforts continue, particularly in West Africa, the Israeli-South African relations became somewhat tense. In November 2009, the South African government issued a harsh statement condemning Israel for approving 900 new housing units in Gilo and evicting Palestinians from their East Jerusalem homes.¹⁰⁶ This is in addition to the tension caused by the conduct of an Israeli security officer working for EL AL Israel Airlines. The latter was accused of having “a racist policy, of deceiving the South African authorities and of seriously violating the constitution.”¹⁰⁷

In general, third world nations in 2009 veered towards a position that is more in favor of the Palestinian issue, and less favorable of Israel. This is due to several reasons: the war on GS, the Israeli intransigence in what regards the settlements and the Judaization plans in the WB, and also for impeding the peace process.

And despite the negative aspects of the Palestinian political division, the impact left by the steadfastness of the people and of the resistance factions in the GS vis-à-vis the Israeli aggression (27/12/2008–18/1/2009) on the international public opinion was remarkable. It effectively promoted the Palestinian issue at the international level and led to the deterioration of the reputation of Israel and the US. For this reason, the year 2009 is the worst year for the image of Israel, as reflected in the HRC’s Goldstone Report, and as expressed by the UNGA, and through the global campaign to prosecute officials and officers in Israel on charges of war crimes and genocide. In other words, the image of Israel before 2009 has changed radically afterwards.

Conclusion

The “public” support in the international community is pushing for more action in favor of the Palestinian side. However, given the intransigence of Israel vis-à-vis international demands regarding the settlements and Jerusalem, and regarding the humanitarian conditions in the occupied territories, it is unlikely that this positive momentum will translate into effective action in the short term.

This means that the year 2010 was an extension of 2009, in terms of the continued international efforts to “persuade” the Israeli government into accepting a freeze on settlement building, the division of Jerusalem and the establishment of a Palestinian state. However, the efforts in this regard will remain within the scope of dialogue with Israel, without using actual pressure cards, be they economic or political let alone military. This means that the Israeli side will not change its policies.

In contrast, the international community will continue to push the Arab countries into further normalization with Israel. It will keep on directing Arab capabilities towards other issues such as Iran, or certain factions which are described in the lexicon of the West as being “terrorists.” It will continue to ensure the Arab silence in case a new Israeli war in GS or Lebanon.

Contemporary history, for reasons well understood by Israel and the major powers, indicates that the Arab side, for many internal and external calculations, at the end of the day will comply with international pressures. Therefore, the year 2010 saw the continuation of the blockade on GS, for even if the Egyptian reconciliation document was signed by Hamas, the issue was related to Hamas altering its strategic policies.

The international and regional pressure will continue, both financially and politically, on the PA, to ensure its return to negotiations with the Israeli side. This is in the context of an Israeli position on continuing building settlements whereby the door remains open for negotiations over this issue, a favorite Israeli negotiation tactic that is prevalent in all subjects.

The distance separating Israel and the international community saw some slight widening in 2010. However, this will not alter, for now, the strategic features of the status quo, especially with the continued international and regional pressure on the Palestinian side in both its wings in GS and the WB.

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Chapter Six

The Land and the Holy Sites

The Land and the Holy Sites

Introduction

The year 2009 constituted a clear manifestation of the saying, “Jerusalem is the essence of the conflict,” and that is so on the Israeli level. For it was clear that, for the Israeli decision-maker, and since the end of the GS war, Jerusalem has become the priority. It has become clear that, for the occupier, the main front in the war he is waging is Jerusalem, unless he was engaged in a military confrontation at a front on his northern or southern borders.

The saying “Jerusalem is the essence of the conflict” remains the dominant theme in the consciousness of the two warring camps, whether on the theoretical and literary level, or on the practical and applied level; even if the two camps differ in their ability to apply this saying and turn it into systematic projects and programs, hence, to a reality on the ground. The Israeli project aimed at turning Jerusalem into a Jewish city, in its religion, culture and population, commonly known as the Judaization project, is most efficient and competent at drawing up plans and programs, and utilizing all capabilities and potentials to translate them into facts. This is made clear, first, in the occupation, second, in ethnic cleansing of the western part of the city, and then in the settlements, excavations, the Wall, and other manifestations of Judaization. Nonetheless, and since 1967, the occupation has been confronted by spontaneous reactions from the Palestinian inhabitants who had remained in the eastern part of the city, and who had managed to adjust to its various schemes and programs with creative reactions, in which they mainly relied on their steadfastness and domestic ingenuity. Thus, for the past 42 years, they prevented resolving the matter of the city’s identity in the manner wished for by the occupation.

This chapter attempts to review the most important developments and challenges related to Palestinian land and holy sites, especially in East Jerusalem and the rest of the WB. It is clear that Israel continued to adopt the same policies and methods that it pursued in past years, unaffected by the course of the peace settlement track, nor by the fact that the PA had fulfilled all its political and security commitments.



Rather, the year 2009 witnessed more actions aimed at Judaizing Jerusalem and at settlement expansion, meanwhile placing more constraints on the Palestinians in their land, water resources, livelihoods and movements.

First: Islamic and Christian Holy Sites

The phrase “the Jewishness of the state” has dominated the Zionist mind, in all its various factions; then on 31/3/2009, Benjamin Netanyahu’s government came to build on the style of Ariel Sharon’s past governments in embracing the efforts to gain the Jews the “right” to pray at the “Temple Mount.” For the most prominent challenge to the alleged Jerusalem’s Jewish identity is the absence of any Jewish holy site, in the form of a building, temple, or historical location of any importance. This drawback causes the Zionist mind to sense genuine failure in formulating the city’s new identity, in spite of what has been accomplished in it in its favor. Thus, the Israel Ministry of Tourism itself uses pictures of *al-Aqsa* Mosque and its golden dome, of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and of various other churches in the Old City, in order to promote tourism in Jerusalem. During 2009, efforts were concentrated on producing authentic infrastructure for “Jewish sacred sites” inside the Old City, whether by building synagogues above ground, such as Ohel Yitzhak (Tent of Isaac) Synagogue facing al-Silsilah gate, the Hurva Synagogue in al-Sharaf neighborhood, “the Jewish Quarter,” or by an integrated network of excavations in which fabricated Jewish shrines are being built, to be open later for visitors.

1. *Al-Aqsa* Mosque

a. Changes in the Israeli Political Stance toward *al-Aqsa* Mosque

During 2009, the government’s embracement of the concept of achieving a Jewish presence in the “Temple Mount” was consolidated. It became an undeclared objective of the government and part of the Jewish consensus on Jerusalem. Thus, an opinion poll conducted by the Hebrew *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper confirmed that 64% of the Hebrew state’s Jewish population is in favor of rebuilding “the Third Temple.” The rate of approval varied between 98.5% for religious Jews, 47% for secular Jews and 91% for the public in general, made up of individuals who do not classify themselves in either camp.¹

Perhaps Netanyahu’s rise to power in itself represented the most important political threat to *al-Aqsa* Mosque, for he is the only prime minister who had announced official approval of the notion that Jews should be allowed to pray in “the Temple Mount”; as in one of his cabinet communiqués in 1996, he made a promise to “guarantee the right of the Jews to pray in their holy places.”² This government’s gravity became clear when, on 23/6/2009, the Internal Security Minister Yitzhak Aharonovitch stormed the mosque’s courtyards and prayer area. Aharonovitch is considered the highest official to storm into the mosque since its occupation; for when Sharon did the same, he was at the time the leader of the opposition.³ The gradual development of the idea of a Jewish presence inside the “Temple Mount” led to changing it from being an isolated idea supported by small religious parties and radical settlement societies that had no political representation before the year 2000, to becoming, during 2009, a principle idea in Jewish political circulation. On 27/7/2009, a full day of discussion in the corridors of the Knesset was dedicated, during which they discussed “ways to consolidate Israel’s dominance and mastery over the Temple Mount.”⁴

b. Excavations and Constructions under *al-Aqsa* Mosque and in Its Perimeter

The period between 21/8/2008 and 21/8/2009 has witnessed the uncovering of five new excavation sites; four of them are located south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque and one to its west, which lets the number of excavation sites, under and around the mosque, comes to 25 sites,⁵ according to the following table:

Table 1/6: Excavations Under and Around *al-Aqsa* Mosque⁶

Direction	Type of excavations	Number
South	Active excavations	7
	Completed excavations	4
West	Active excavations	4
	Completed excavations	9
North	Active excavations	1
	Completed excavations	0
Total		25

Thus, the number of completed excavations that are open to visitors has reached 13, while the number of active excavations is 12, knowing that these numbers designate those excavations that were officially made public. It is certain that there are a number of undeclared excavations, which normally would not be officially announced until the completion of their first stage.⁷ The hollow cavity below *al-Aqsa* Mosque is today more like an integrated city, with multiple entrances, passageways and landmarks. Perhaps reducing the excavations' issue to numbers and digits does not serve to understand their reality (see map 1/6).

Developments in the periphery of *al-Aqsa* Mosque were not confined to excavations, they were extended to include the building of a number of structures, through which the occupier tried to translate the concept of the city's Jewish sanctity into buildings and landmarks. The most conspicuous location on which work was carried out during 2009 was the Mughrabi Gate bridge, where Israel continued to prevent the Jordanian endowments' technical crews from entering it or taking any measurements of it, in order to hinder the presentation of any Jordanian project to the World Heritage Committee of the UNESCO. The Israelis hope that the "Israeli plan," which aims to change the shape of the bridge, connect it to the Jewish prayer yard beside Western Wall and destroy the Islamic relics underneath, becomes the plan of a *fait accompli* that the committee will approve for lack of an alternative. As for the most prominent structure that saw development during 2009, it is the Hurva Synagogue, which is a huge synagogue, situated in al-Sharaf neighborhood, to the west of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. It is four stories high, on top of it, there is a huge dome equal in height to that of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It hides al-Qibli Mosque completely from view, for the one looking at it from a western vantage. This synagogue is considered the biggest Jewish landmark planned to be constructed in the Old City; knowing that third of its cost was financed by the Israeli government.⁸ The work on it has been completed, and it was inaugurated on 15/3/2010.⁹

Hurva Synagogue



Table 2/6: Construction and Expropriation Around *al-Aqsa* Mosque¹⁰

Type of violation	Number
Construction	6
Expropriation	2
Already built constructions	4
Total	12

c. Jewish Presence Inside *al-Aqsa* Mosque and Interference in Its Administration

The repeated storming of *al-Aqsa* Mosque aims at turning the Jews' claim of having the "right" to enter it into an established fact, accepted by the city's inhabitants as well as by the Arab and Islamic consciousness. These storming incidents are carried out by three main parties: settlement groups, and official and security parties; in the period between 21/8/2008–21/8/2009, their total number came to 43 incidents.¹¹ The most notable of the security storming incidents took place on 11/6/2009, and was more like a maneuver to close the mosque's courtyard for a period of several hours;¹² there was another incident on 18/8/2009, which constituted a real maneuver, similar to a state of emergency, during which the Israeli soldiers would be compelled to scale the southern and western outer walls of the mosque, in light of the worshippers' closing of the mosque's doors from the inside.¹³ The most important conclusion that can be drawn from these security maneuvers is that, for the security forces, which are an executive apparatus, to reach the stage of training to shut and encircle the mosque's courtyards and to intervene inside whenever necessary, suggests that the decision to change the status quo inside the mosque's area has been taken on the political level, in anticipation of the right moment to implement it.

In the second half of 2009, storming incidents by radical Jews, who are protected and reinforced by the Israeli police, began to take an unprecedented escalatory direction. These incidents were in an attempt to allow performance of communal prayers by hundreds of Jewish religious extremists, during daytime hours while the Israeli police was providing them with protection squads, whose number equals or surpasses that of the extremists. The days of 28/9/2009, 5/10/2009 and 25/10/2009 witnessed sizeable repeated storming incidents of this kind. During the one that took place on 3/10/2009, the mosque and those guarding it were placed under



siege for eight straight days.¹⁴ While on 25/10/2009, the storming forces carried out unprecedented assaults, burning the mosque's main electrical transformer, and shutting the doors of al-Qibli Mosque, with the worshippers inside; thus exerting total control over all the courtyards.¹⁵

The fact that the worshippers and public leaders, from Jerusalem and the territories occupied in 1948, stood guard inside had a profound impact on frustrating these storming incidents and keeping them from achieving their goals. It formed a state of real pressure on the occupation and on attracting the media's attention to the mosque's courtyards, through confrontations and continuing to keep guard. During these periods, the mosque constituted a symbol for an unprecedented public response, the like of which Jerusalem and its outskirts had not witnessed since *al-Aqsa Intifadah*, and for an external reaction not witnessed by the region for a long time. Thus, on 5/10/2009, Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi made a call to turn Friday 9/10/2009 a day of Arabic and Islamic anger in solidarity with *al-Aqsa* Mosque, following which there was public demonstrations in several countries.¹⁶ Furthermore, on 8/10/2009, Jordan's King 'Abdullah II warned that "attempts to change the situation in the city could destabilize relations with Jordan."¹⁷ These developments prompted *The Daily Telegraph* correspondent in the occupied territories to entitle his article "Fears of Third Intifada as Tension Grows in Israel" in his comments on calls for strikes inside Palestine, and the call by Sheikh al-Qaradawi and its reverberations inside the occupied territories.¹⁸ The occupiers realized how far and wide the effect of this guardianship of the mosque is, and the reactions it entails. Therefore, after these events had ended, they started issuing individual decrees calling for the expulsion of the personalities and activists who led this guardianship in the mosque during its siege, they also arrested and detained a great many of them.¹⁹

2. Jerusalem's Islamic Holy Sites

In addition to the assaults on *al-Aqsa* Mosque, Israel also targeted the rest of the Islamic holy sites in the city; these attacks were directed against:

a. The Cemeteries

Excavations and constructions continued in the Ma'man Allah (Mamilla) Cemetery with the aim of building the Center for Human Dignity—Museum of Tolerance Jerusalem (MOTJ). In addition, attacks continued on al-Rahmah Gate

Cemetery, which is adjacent to the eastern wall of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, where, on 21/7/2009, a number of Jewish societies and personalities submitted a request to the Supreme Court to confirm this cemetery as a public garden, and to start turning 1,800 square meters of its area into a public park. The documents that *al-Aqsa* Foundation for Endowment and Heritage viewed showed that the court had granted this request.²⁰

b. The Mosques

Israel continues to close a number of mosques in the Old City and forbid prayers in them. The most noted of these mosques, which came under real attack during 2009, was the small ‘Umari Mosque in al-Sharaf neighborhood, on parts of which the construction of the Hurva Synagogue is taking place.

3. Jerusalem’s Christian Holy Sites

Jerusalem’s Christian holy sites are being subjected to an Israeli methodical assault, focused on benefiting as much as possible from the properties of various Christian churches in the city. The Israeli authorities view the Orthodox Church in particular, as the “goose that lays golden eggs.” It is the church of the Greek clergy who colluded with the occupation to pass to it strategic lands and real estates, such as the lands on which the Knesset building stands, that of the Prime Ministry building, that of the Ma’ale Adumim settlement, the biggest in East Jerusalem, and that of the Har Homa settlement which is located on Jabal Abu Ghneim, in addition to the Israeli detention and interrogation center at the Russian Compound (Moscowbiya), which used to be a guest house for Russian pilgrims, and the lands of Omar Square at the western entrance of the Old City, facing Jaffa Gate (*Bab al-Khalil*).²¹ Developments during 2009 were centered on four tracks:

a. Developments in the Omar Ibn al-Khattab Square Deal

On 18/3/2005, an article in the Hebrew *Maariv* newspaper revealed a deal made between the Orthodox Church and Jewish investors, according to which the Church leased 2 hotels and several stores in Omar Ibn al-Khattab Square near Jaffa Gate, west of the Old City, to Jewish investors. It was leased for 198 years, in exchange for an amount, estimated at the time to be \$130 million,²² knowing that these properties were in fact already rented to Jerusalemite families and merchants. The repercussions of this issue, as well as the exceptional efforts exerted at the time by the Orthodox congregations in Palestine and Jordan, led to the unprecedented



dismissal of the Orthodox Patriarch Irineos I and to obtaining a commitment from the new Patriarch Theophilos III to revoke the deal and stop any future passing of other property to the occupation.

However, the new Greek Patriarch did not keep his promise and did not take the necessary actions required of him to annul the deal. Moreover, he did not refrain from accepting the sums paid to the Church by the Jewish investors as rent for these properties. This prompted the Jewish investors in 2008 to take advantage of the situation and file a complaint with the occupation's courts against the Church and the Palestinian tenants who occupy these properties. The investors aimed at forcing the Church to officially recognize the transaction, hand the properties over to them, and keep the Palestinian tenants from making use of these properties, in addition to asking them to pay the rent due on these properties, with a retroactive effects that dates at the time of signing the transaction between the Church and the investors.

In December 2009, the different parties reached an agreement, according to which the Jewish investors would give up their lawsuit against the families renting these properties, while the lawsuit against the Orthodox Patriarchate would remain standing until these estates are handed over to the Jewish investors. In other words, the occupation's courts denied the Palestinian tenants representation as a party to this case, and confined it to the Church and the Jewish investors. This situation is expected to lead in the future to concluding a settlement between the Jewish investors and the Church at Palestinian tenants' expense, especially that, until now, the new Greek Patriarch did not express any commitment to his vow to prevent the sale of Church properties to Jewish investors.

b. The Mar Elias Monastery Deal

The executive committee of the Orthodox Conference in Palestine issued a statement in which it revealed that the Greek Patriarch Theophilos III had sold a piece of land estimated at 71 donums of the Mar Elias Monastery lands, on the road connecting Jerusalem and Bethlehem, south of Jerusalem. The Patriarch concluded this deal in total secrecy. However, it was uncovered due to a dispute over the right of land use between two Jewish companies; the first claiming that the deposed Patriarch Irineos I had signed an agreement with it, according to which he gave this company the right to administer this land; while the second company presents documents signed by Patriarch Theophilos III that confirms its

purchase of these lands on 28/4/2009. In a meeting on 6/8/2009, the Holy Synod approved the right of the second company to the land and ratified Theophilos III sale of it.²³ The publicization of the deal caused angry reactions from the Orthodox Church congregations in Palestine and Jordan, most prominent of these was the announcement by the Council of Arab Orthodox Organizations in Palestine that it is boycotting Patriarch Theophilos III because he did not keep his commitment to the promises that he had made to the Palestinian and Jordanian governments on the eve of his election.²⁴ This decision prompted a great many Arab clerics and members of the Orthodox Church congregation to boycott Jerusalem's Patriarch during Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem, including boycotting the Christmas mass celebrated by Theophilos III,²⁵ and in which the PA lowered the level of its representation, with the absence of the Palestinian President Mahmud 'Abbas who settled for sending Tayyib 'Abd al-Rahim, secretary-general of the Palestinian presidency, to represent him.²⁶

This deal revealed the continuation of the Greek clergy in their policy of selling Church endowment lands to Israel, in spite of all the promises that Theophilos III had made at the time of his assuming his post. Furthermore, it contributed to confirming doubts that Patriarch Theophilos III had struck a deal with the occupation to complete the sale of Omar Ibn al-Khattab Square real estates. It is worth mentioning here also that the reactions of the PA and the Jordanian government were much less than their reactions toward passing on the Church endowment lands in the past; as they did not exert any genuine pressure on the Patriarch and did not threaten to withdraw their recognition of him; they merely expressed their condemnation, and called on the Patriarch to stop the transaction.

c. Constructions in the Western Wall of the Holy Sepulcher Church

During 2009, Israel's attacks were not confined to attempts to control Church endowments, in collusion with the Greek clergy; this year witnessed an assault of the most sacred Christian Holy Site in the city. That took place when Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) began, on 23/11/2009, to carry out excavations and restoration operations near St. Mary's Gate in the western wall of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher; it was said that the aim of these operations is to reopen the closed Mary's Gate,²⁷ without consulting the Church or even coordinating with it. Following these operations, the Jordanian government called the Israeli ambassador there and handed him a protest note, demanded putting a stop to the operations and

a return of things to the way they were before.²⁸ What is striking here is that the Greek Patriarch and clergy did not protest the operations that the Israeli authorities had carried out in the Church, in spite of the fact that these operations represented a clear infringement on their authority.

d. The Rise in the Efforts to Isolate the Arab Clergy in the Orthodox Church

For centuries, the Greek clergy have been holding a monopoly on the decisions of the Orthodox Church in Jerusalem, as well as on managing its affairs and properties. The Greeks endeavor to keep the Arab clergy from becoming members of the Holy Synod or reach other sensitive positions in the Church. They work on removing the Arab clergy from their posts and constraining them, in particular those who express their opposition to the directions give by the Patriarch and the Holy Synod, to whom most authorities are entrusted, and the overwhelming majority of whom are Greek clergy; in clear violation of the Jordanian law issued in 1958 that regulates the Church's work.²⁹

On 17/11/2009, and in the framework of the Greek clergy's endeavor to restrain the Arab clergy, Patriarch Theophilos III dismissed the Archimandrite 'Atallah Hanna from his post as vice chairman of the Orthodox Church Court,³⁰ in a measure that was met with widespread condemnation from the Orthodox authorities and institutions. On 26/11/2009, hundreds from the Orthodox congregation organized a sit-in in Amman, to object to the patriarch's decision. However, he did not back down, and insisted on dismissing 'Atallah Hanna from his post.³¹

4. Islamic and Christian Holy Sites in the Rest of Historic Palestine

a. The WB

During 2009, the WB mosques were subjected to 15 attacks, most of which took place in Hebron, against the Ibrahimi Mosque. The most violent one occurred at dawn of Friday 11/12/2009 in Yasuf village,³² when armed settlers torched the Grand Hasan Khadr Mosque in the village located east of the city of Salfit, north of WB, leading to the burning of a large part of it.³³ In the following, we will cite briefly the most important of these attacks.³⁴ We start with the infringements on al-Ibrahimi Mosque, when on 9/4/2009; the Israeli forces announced a two-day closure of the mosque. They also shut down the mosque in the face of worshippers for a whole day on 12/4/2009, 18/8/2009 and 23/9/2009. The occupation kept the

worshippers from entering it on 28/7/2009, while they stormed it on 25/9/2009. In another attack, a settler tried on 10/1/2009 to break into Kfar Qaddoum Mosque near the city of Qalqilya, firing bullets into the air to frighten the worshippers in it. Then on 2/6/2009, Jewish extremists threw a dead pig on the entrance of Nabi Elias Mosque in Qalqilya, and on 27/7/2009, some radical settlers broke a window in the Prophet Abraham Sanctuary in Hebron. Furthermore, on 11/12/2009, groups of settlers torched Yasuf Mosque near the city of Nablus.

b. The GS

During the Israeli aggression on GS that lasted 22 days, starting on 27/12/2008 and ending on 18/1/2009, the Israeli forces targeted 152 mosques, completely demolishing 45 of them, and causing partial damage to 107 others.³⁵

c. The Territories Occupied in 1948

Mosques and cemeteries in the territories occupied in 1948 were subject to six main attacks that went as follows:³⁶ the first attack took place on 9/1/2009, when a group of radical settlers tried to burn the Sea Mosque in Tiberias; followed by another attack on 9/5/2009, when tens of radical Jews wrote racist slogans on the walls of al-Manshiyyah Mosque in the city of Acre. As for the third attack, it took place on 23/5/2009 when the Israeli police prevented the residents of Acre and al-Shaghura from restoring Prophet Yusha (Joshua) Mosque; followed on 21/6/2009 by a permission from Israel's Supreme Court to build cow pens in the cemeteries of the al-Barwah village, made deserted by the expulsion of its people. On the following day, 22/6/2009, the Supreme Court gave a similar permission for the cemeteries of the equally deserted village of Ajzam. The last attack happened on 18/8/2009, when the Israeli authorities tore down the southern wall of al-Naqib cemetery in Lod.

Second: The Jerusalemites' Suffering³⁷

For the occupier, the demographic battle constitutes the most difficult battleground in his war to Judaize the city, for it does not fall within a scope that can be controlled simply through decrees, measures and confiscations, the same as lands and properties. Largely in this arena, the battle's outcome is controlled by the vitality and energy of the other party in the battle and his ability to persist and

survive, or rather to multiply, in spite of the occupation's circumstances. This could perhaps be the most prominent point of strength of the Jerusalemite society since 1967 and until today. The Israeli leaders today, and in particular those responsible for the plan to Judaize Jerusalem, are aware that the demographic balance presents the most crucial threat to this plan, for it is the matter that lets them feel the difficulty—or rather the impossibility—of realizing this Judaization plan. This challenge was a principle incentive for drawing up a comprehensive structural plan for the city, known today as “Jerusalem 2020.” This plan sets aside a special chapter for discussing the demographic balance between various population groups, maintains that, within present expectations, and by 2020, the Arab ratio of the total population of the city will reach 40.2%. This plan defines a number of policies and the areas where intervention by the state should be adopted in order to lower the ratio of the Arab population to the level determined by previous governments, so as to keep the ratio of the Jews no less than 70% of the city's population.³⁸

1. The Demographic Battle's Reality

After their occupation of the western part of the city in 1948, Zionist gangs executed a comprehensive ethnic cleansing of Jerusalem and its villages. They expelled the Palestinian residents from the parts of Jerusalem that they had occupied, which represented at the time 87% of the city's area. According to the 1948 census, only 1,100 Arabs remained in the city, representing 1.3% of the occupied area's population.³⁹ However, in 1967, when the whole city came under occupation, the occupation forces could not execute a similar ethnic cleansing, due to a number of historic and subjective circumstances. Soon after the occupation, they conducted a census of the population from which they excluded all those residents who were out of the city at the time. Thus, they counted 68,800 Palestinians, most of whom live in the eastern part of the city with its altered boundaries, and 197,700 Jews, gathered in its western part. This meant that the population balance in the city at the time indicated the presence of 25.8% Arab residents, versus 74.2% Jewish residents.⁴⁰ At the time, the occupier counted on being able, in the long run and by systematic planning, to attract Jews to the city; and by applying systematic pressure on the Arab residents, to push them to voluntary emigration. Thus, he would be able to alter this demographic ratio in favor of the Jews; and with that, the city will become a pure Jewish capital for a pure Jewish state, as was the hope of the Zionist plan. Yet, over 40 long years, that were the stage for long-range systematic

planning, the imbalance in the ratio increased in the Palestinian inhabitants' favor, to become 34.8% for Palestinians against 65.2% for the Jews.⁴¹

Over the last four decades, not a year passed in which the Jewish population growth surpassed that of the Palestinians,⁴² with the exception of the year 1990. This Jewish population growth declined gradually from 2.6% in 1978 to 0.9% in 2002, at the peak of *al-Aqsa intifadah*, only to improve slightly and reach 1.3% in 2007,⁴³ which is lower than the general average of the Jewish population growth of that year in Israel, which reached 1.6%. The real predicament of the Israeli planners is that this increase includes the natural increase in population added to the number of immigrants coming from abroad. Almost since 1980, statistics showed that the resultant of the migration from and to the city was negative, denoting that, on the level of internal migration, Jerusalem was, and still is, an expelling city for Jewish residents. For during 2007, the number of migrants from the city reached 17,600, while that of the migrants to the city came to 11,200 persons. This makes the result of the internal migration negative by 6,400 persons. If we add to this the arrival of 3,200 Jewish immigrants from outside the country with the aim to settle in Jerusalem, the final resultant of immigration would register a decrease of 3,200 immigrants.⁴⁴ Furthermore, the population vital indicators impart a continuance of the Palestinian population growth in Jerusalem, against a decrease of that of Jews. The average age of Muslims in the city is 18.7 years, while that of the Jews is 25 years. We should mention here that the average age of the residents of East Jerusalem's settlements is higher than the general average, reaching 31.2 for the Gilo settlement residents and 34 for the East Talpiot residents.⁴⁵ As for the average number of family members in the city, it is 5.2 for Arab families, corresponding to 3.3 for Jewish families.⁴⁶

Faced with these facts, the occupation state's decision-makers have adopted several measures to contain the Arab population growth, with the aim of lowering the Arab population ratio from 34.8% to a maximum of 30%, during a period of no more than 10 years. To realize this difficult objective, the occupation state has adopted three strategic solutions, the first: activating the policy of expelling Arab residents; the second: activating the measures of bringing in Jewish residents, these two measures will be discussed in the next section; and the third: changing the municipal boundaries to coincide with the Wall's path designed to keep out the largest possible number of Arab residents, and to include the largest possible number of Jewish residents; this will be discussed in the context of the battle over the land.



2. The Attempts to Expel the Palestinian Residents

a. Withdrawing the “ID Cards”⁴⁷

Since the occupation of the city in 1967, the Israeli authorities have been adopting a policy of withdrawing the Jerusalemites’ blue ID cards. However, in the past, the pace of withdrawing the ID cards was not sufficient nor did it contribute effectively to limiting the Palestinian population growth in the city; in spite of the fact that the occupier was betting on it as one of his most effective weapons in this context. For the number of ID cards withdrawn between 1967 and 2007 is 8,558 cards, while the number of those withdrawn during 2008 alone reached 4,577 cards. This means that the cards withdrawn in 2008 represents 34.8% of the total number of cards withdrawn since the city’s occupation, the number of which reached 13,135 cards withdrawn over a period of 41 years.⁴⁸

This development is likely to continue in the foreseeable future; as, following the announcement of the new municipal limits that coincide with the Wall’s path, the Municipality of Jerusalem will proceed to withdraw the blue resident cards from the Palestinian residents isolated outside the Wall, considering them as living outside the city. Thus, the law of “Jerusalem, the center of life” applies to them, which imposes on Jerusalem’s residents to prove, by any manner possible, that the city is the center of their lives, so that they would preserve the right to reside in it.

b. Mass Expulsion

Following the city’s occupation in 1967, the Israeli authorities applied a policy of mass expulsion in Jerusalem, but only once; and that was against the Moroccan Quarter residents, whose houses were razed to the ground and turned into a prayer area for the Jews. The Israeli authorities’ urgent need to limit the Palestinian population growth brought to the fore this policy, in spite of its complexity and the heavy toll it extracts internally and internationally. Actually, the occupation’s Jerusalem Municipality started to implement this policy in November 2008 against the residents of Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, followed by al-Bustan neighborhood in February 2009. Then mass warnings came in succession threatening hundreds of Jerusalemite families. We shall discuss the mass evacuation decrees in detail in the next section.

c. Fragmentizing and Encircling Palestinian Residential Blocks

The occupier realizes that mass evacuation will not allow him to expel 281,800 persons, the estimated number of the city's Palestinian population in 2010,⁴⁹ because it is a difficult procedure. It will certainly be confronted with real resistance from the inhabitants of these neighborhoods and will provoke international media and political pressure. Realism imposes the necessity to study the best available methods to benefit from this policy and allow it to succeed. That is why the occupier resorted to restricting the scope of his actions and narrowing down his objective, so to make it more realizable. Therefore, instead of Judaizing all of Jerusalem's neighborhoods, he began to concentrate his efforts on those neighborhoods nearest to the Old City, which represent its Arabic embracing arms, from Sheikh Jarrah to the north, al-Suwaneh and Shiyah to the East, and Silwan to the south. Thus, we find that he uses the evacuation policy to isolate them from their surroundings, and to deal with a population block of no more than one third of the city's Palestinian residents, concentrated in the Old City and its adjacent neighborhoods, which he would then surround with a crescent of Jewish population blocks connected to West Jerusalem. Thus, he would leave the bigger population blocks in the city isolated from the center, particularly Beit Hanina and Shu'fat to the north that, alone, house almost 70 thousand Palestinians, and represent together the center of the heaviest population density in Jerusalem, in addition to Sur Baher and Beit Safafa to the south.

d. Housing Restrictions

Limiting housing opportunities is one of the most effective means used by the occupier to limit population growth. The area available for construction in Jerusalem, according to the current building regulations, does not exceed nine thousand donums of the 72 thousand donums that make up the area of the eastern part of the city.⁵⁰ Anyway, building in these areas requires permits, which may take on average three years to obtain for a single apartment, with an average cost of \$300 for each meter square.⁵¹

As for the number of building permits granted annually to Arab residents, it does not exceed, on average, 200 permits. So in the period extending between November 2007 and November 2009, the Israeli authorities granted the Jerusalemites only 400 building permits, compared to more than three thousands given during the same period to Jewish settlers in East Jerusalem,



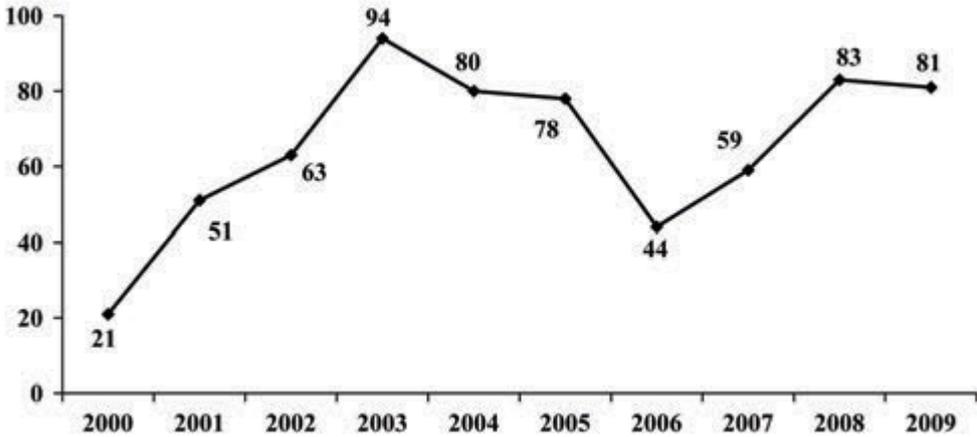
apart from the Israeli government settlement projects.⁵² The restrictions placed on building permits left no choice for Jerusalemites other than to build on their lands without waiting for permits from the Israeli authorities. This has produced a creative phenomenon of defying the occupation, which became evident in the presence of 15 thousand unauthorized homes in the city.⁵³ Although these homes are threatened with demolition at any moment, and although their owners live in constant worry about their future and that of their homes, the unauthorized buildings were one of the principle reasons that allowed Jerusalemite society to survive, continue and grow in numbers, to the extent it has reached today.

The cruelest measure that falls under housing restrictions is house demolitions that focus on unauthorized houses. Furthermore, the Israeli authorities apply the policy of forcing the house’s owner to tear it down himself, or they tear it down and force him to pay for the demolition expenses as well as fines. It seems that the Israeli authorities have concentrated their efforts in 2009 on imposing and implementing this measure, thus forcing the residents to tear down, with their hands, about 23 of their properties.⁵⁴ This measure serves to achieve the housing objectives of the structural plan “Jerusalem 2020,” which considered intensifying punishment measures against unauthorized building phenomenon a necessary and effective way to limit the Palestinian housing expansion.⁵⁵ As for the number of demolished homes during 2009, compared to previous years, it was as follows:

Table 3/6: Demolished Houses in Jerusalem 2000–2009⁵⁶

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	Total
No. of demolished houses	21	51	63	94	80	78	44	59	83	81	654

Demolished Houses in Jerusalem 2000–2009



In spite of the gravity of the policy of house demolitions and its intensification in Jerusalem, it remains inadequate in dealing with the phenomenon of unauthorized construction, as those responsible for Judaizing the city had hoped. The numbers above tells that the annual average of demolished houses in Jerusalem comes to 66.2 houses. Simple arithmetic tells us that demolishing houses at this rate requires 241 years before the Israeli authorities are able to remove them all. This is so if we suppose that demolished houses did not get rebuild, which is not a realistic supposition. In spite of the reservation with which most Palestinian and Arab circles view these numbers, the Israelis realize their importance and deal with them in all seriousness. That is why they demand finding effective and harsh measures to the phenomenon of unauthorized construction; mass expulsion is one of these measures. Furthermore, enticing the owners of these houses to obtain permits, thus, thrusting them into a legal maze, collecting exorbitant fees and fines from them are but some of the proposed solutions backed by the mayor of Jerusalem.

Map 2/6: Containing Palestinian Neighborhoods in and Around Jerusalem's Old City 2008



Source: <http://www.fmep.org/maps/jerusalem/containing-palestinian-neighborhoods-in-and-around-jerusalem-old-city-mar-2008>

3. Attempt to Promote Jerusalem as a Jewish Residential Center

Over the last four decades, attracting Jewish residents to Jerusalem constituted the biggest failure of those in charge of the Judaization plan, since the resultant of the Jewish internal migration from and to Jerusalem came out negative, seeing that from 1980–2007, 105 thousand Jews left the city.⁵⁷ The “Jerusalem 2020” plan has diagnosed this crisis and placed the promotion of the city as a Jewish residential center among its main objectives. To achieve that, the planners and decision-makers will strive to provide low cost housing for young Jewish married couples, to execute transportation and infrastructure projects that would connect the eastern settlements to the Jewish housing center in the city’s west, and to work on moving what is called “the institutions of the Jewish people” to Jerusalem; which includes ministries, governmental departments, and the headquarters of the army command, the police force, and the Israel Border Police, in addition to the main headquarters of international and civil organizations, embassies and consulates. Furthermore, they will try to instill Jerusalem’s standing in the young generation, increase the number of trips and tours to it, and add tourist attractions to it.⁵⁸

The election of right-wing Nir Barakat from the Kadima Party to the presidency of Jerusalem’s municipality gave a strong thrust to the efforts of promoting Jerusalem as a Jewish residential center. He considers consolidating Jerusalem’s Jewish identity one of his main objectives, without allowing this objective to become a push and a restriction factor for secular residents, unlike his religious predecessor Uri Lupolianski. Thus, during his tenure, work was resumed on the light rail system, but at a quicker pace, after having stopped during his predecessor’s tenure, due to protests by religious Jews that the train will run on Saturdays.⁵⁹ Furthermore, he began to build housing for young married couples in the far west of the Adumim Bloc, in a manner that would bring life back to this area that had failed to attract Jewish residents because of its distance from the city’s Jewish center.⁶⁰ He also started to concentrate on successful apartment complexes within the city and encourage moving there, as in the settlements of Gilo and Har Homa south of the city. These pursuits have been further consolidated with the arrival of Benjamin Netanyahu to the seat of government in 2009.



Third: The Settlement and Judaization Process in Jerusalem

The year 2009 has witnessed a sharp escalation in the struggle over land in Jerusalem. This escalation and the targeting of Jerusalem were clear when, in November, Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, excluded Jerusalem from his declaration of a 10 month moratorium on settlement building in the territories occupied in 1967. This escalation reached its peak when, on 18/12/2009, he appointed in his office a special coordinator to coordinate matters between him and the Municipality of Jerusalem to facilitate and speed up house demolition operations in it, at the forefront of which were the houses of al-Bustan neighborhood, south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.⁶¹

The intensity of the struggle over land in Jerusalem and its tools vary with the distance of how far from or near to the city's center, represented by the Old City. In the following, we will shed light on this struggle based on dividing Jerusalem's regions according to this criterion.

1. The Old City

Jerusalem's Old City is the city's center. It is situated on the borderline between its eastern and western parts. It has an area of less than one kilometer square (only 871 donums). In 2007, some 36,965 persons lived there; of these, 33,109 were Palestinians and 3,856 were Jewish settlers.⁶² The number of Palestinian residents of the Old City decreases at a rate of 0.2% annually, while the corresponding rate of decrease for the Jewish residents is 0.1% annually.⁶³ According to this rate of decrease, it is expected that, by the end of 2009, the number of Palestinians in the Old City will be 32,977, while that of settlers will reach 3,848 for the same year. The Old City is considered the most densely populated region of Jerusalem, as the average number of family members in a household in Arab neighborhoods is 5.7, while that in the Jewish Quarter is 4.2; knowing that the average area of a house in the Arab neighborhoods is 43 square meters, while that of a house in the Jewish Quarter is 71.8 meter squares.⁶⁴

Jerusalem's Old City is divided into four main quarters: the Muslim Quarter, the Christian Quarter, the Armenian Quarter and the Jewish Quarter. According to the figures of the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, Islamic endowments own 24% of the Old City's properties and lands, the Christian Church endowments

own 29%, and 28% are owned by private Palestinians, most of which are family endowments; while Israel has appropriated the remaining 19% of them.⁶⁵

Since it took control of Jerusalem's Old City in 1967, Israel has been facing the dilemma of realizing a Jewish presence in this town, which is largely owned by Palestinians and is full of Palestinian residents. To confront this dilemma, Israel has adopted a systematic policy that follows two parallel tracks:

The first track: reducing the area owned by Palestinians; and that by tearing down Palestinian homes in the Old City, or freezing them and preventing disposal of them. The first manifestation of this policy was the tearing down in June 1967 of Moroccan Quarter, which is adjacent to the Western Wall, freezing Palestinian properties and preventing them from reaping any gain from them. That was achieved by applying the Planning and Building Law, which classifies large parts of the Old City as archeological sites or green areas, which mean that the Palestinians cannot build any new property, restore any existing one, or utilize any piece of land in these areas without the "state's" permission.

To date, the Israeli authorities continue to employ the same policies against Palestinians in the Old City. Thus, in 2009, they demolished 11 homes in Jerusalem's Old City that used to house 66 Palestinians, and issued orders to demolish 80 others. The policy of demolishing houses in the Old City does not only affect property and land distribution; it has great bearing on the demographic balance in it as well, since the Old City is considered the most densely populated area of Jerusalem, especially the Muslim Quarter in which the average number of family household members is 6.9 individual.⁶⁶ Furthermore, in light of the Israeli authorities' ban on building and restoration, the occupants of every demolished house will necessarily move outside the Old City.

In monitoring the policy of property freeze and denying making use of it, the Jerusalem Center for Social and Economic Rights (JCSER) issued on 1/5/2009 a report in which it revealed that the Israeli authorities forbid carrying out all forms of restoration and maintenance works on about 1,500 properties in the Old City. Furthermore, they impose severe restrictions on Palestinian construction within the Old City, and ban any additions to existing buildings.⁶⁷

On 5/2/2010, the Hebrew weekly *Yerushalayim* newspaper revealed plans to intensify the restrictions placed on building in Jerusalem's Old City. The newspaper confirmed that, lately, the Planning Department of the Municipality of Jerusalem

has prepared a comprehensive plan for offering building permits in the Old City, stipulating the formation of a new committee to study every request for a building permit inside the walls of the Old City. It also decreed the imposition of restrictions on additions to standing structures and on building new ones, specifying special guidelines for their architectural design, considering all the area within the walls a construction zone, and permitting building only according to the detailed design.

The second track: expanding the area owned by Jews. As the space in the Old City is limited and fully occupied, any addition to Jewish property necessarily means seizing Palestinian property. Israel has followed different methods in gaining control of Palestinian properties, the most effective of which were property confiscations for the benefit of public utilities. Israel began a series of confiscations in the Old City in 1967, when it laid hands on an area close to 116 thousand meter squares (116 donums) in the south of the city, by applying the Land Law Order (acquisition for public projects). This area included the Jewish Quarter, al-Sharaf neighborhood, al-Midan neighborhood, al-Qara'in neighborhood, parts of al-Jawa'nih neighborhood, in addition to Hosh al-'Asali, Hosh Nimr and Hosh Khammarah, all of which are known today as "the Jewish Quarter."⁶⁸

During the following decades, the Israeli authorities resorted to other methods less politically costly than the method of mass confiscations. They provided legal and political cover to settlement societies, enabling them to control the properties of the Old City by exploiting legal loopholes in their registration and in determining their ownership, or by tempting their owners to sell them in exchange for huge sums of money.⁶⁹ Moreover, with the support of the Israeli authorities, Jewish settlers were able to seize many real estates in the Old City, until by the beginning of 2009, they had gained control of more than 50 buildings in different parts of the city, in which about one thousand Jewish settlers reside.⁷⁰

The Ateret Cohanim (lit. crown of the priests), supported by wealthy Jews and Zionist Christians of the US, is considered the most active of the societies working to control the Old City's houses. The Hebrew *Haaretz* newspaper published reportage on the activities of the Ateret Cohanim in which it revealed that this institute has been buying Arab properties in East Jerusalem.⁷¹ The last of these buildings was the house of the Abu Jabir family in al-Sa'diyyah neighborhood in the Old City's Islamic Quarter. It was occupied by settlers from the Ateret Cohanim on 2/4/2009, with the support of the Israeli police. The settlers are living in this

house in spite of the fact that the Israeli courts did not make a decision regarding the dispute between the property's owners and the institute.

On 12/9/2009, the *Haaretz* newspaper also revealed the existence of a secret bulletin distributed by Ateret Cohanim to its financiers and contributors, which contains details about the houses owned by the institute in the Old City and the Arab Quarter. The bulletin shows that the society owns 26 houses in the Old City, among them six houses offered for sale to wealthy Jews in the US and Israel for a price of no less than \$1.5 million per house.

2. The Neighborhoods Embracing the Old City

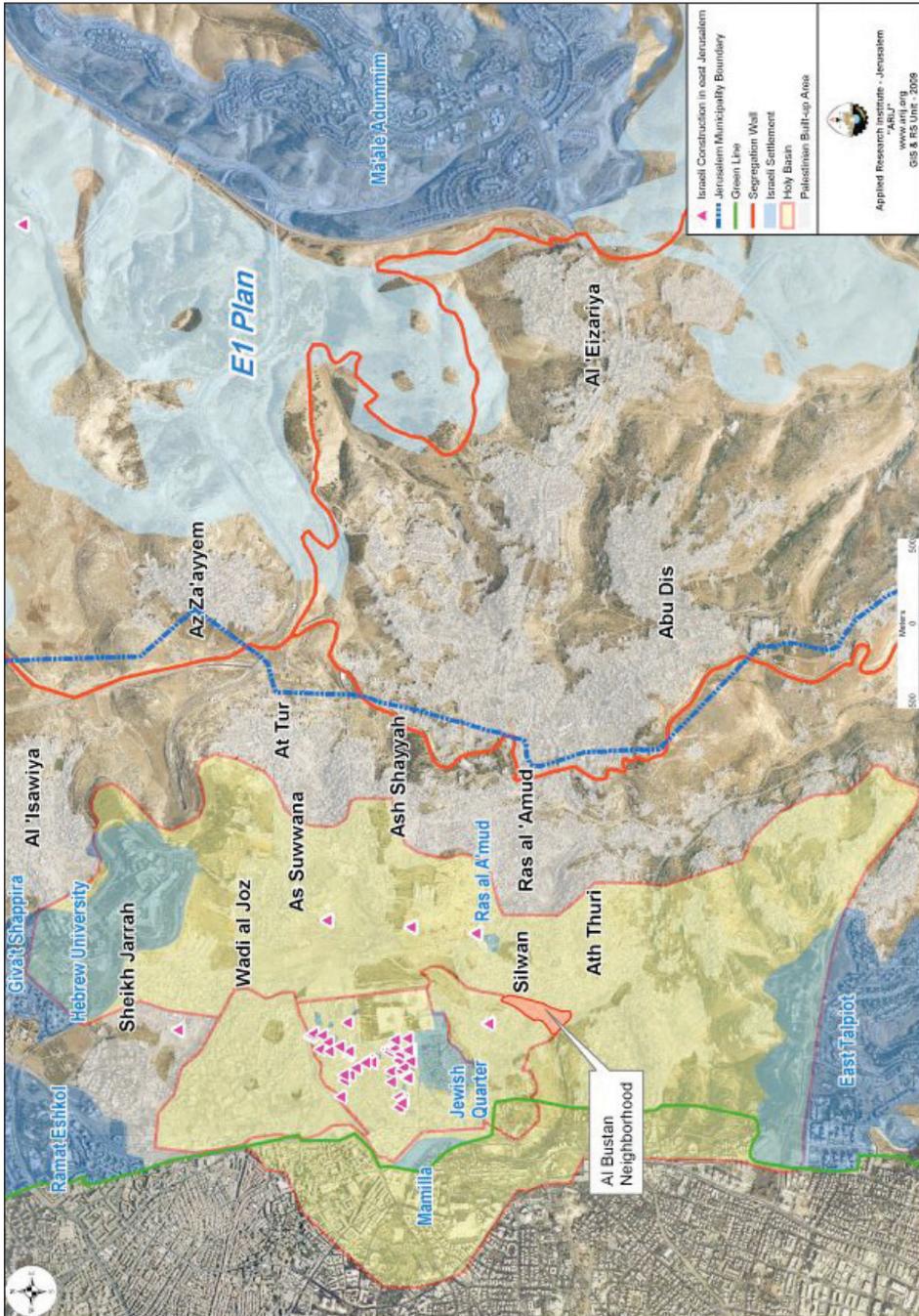
By this term, we mean the neighborhoods that are close geographically to the Old City and have direct contact with it. These neighborhoods are Herod's Gate (*Bab al-Sahira*), Wadi al-Joz and Sheikh Jarrah in the north; the Silwan suburb neighborhoods (Wadi Hilwah, al-Bustan, al-'Abbasiyah, etc.), Ras al-'Amoud and al-Thawri in the south; the neighborhoods of al-Tur, al-Suwaneh and Shiyah in the east; as for the west and southwest, the town is bordered by neighborhoods having a Jewish majority.

This area (the area embracing the Old City) is today considered one of the hottest confrontation points in Jerusalem. Israel exerts the greatest portion of its effort to control Jerusalem's neighborhoods, in spite of the political pressure that this has caused and continue to cause Israel in the international arena. This is due to the following reasons:

- a. Judaizing the town's center (the Old City and its environs, or what Israel calls the "Holy Basin"), expelling the Palestinian inhabitants to the outskirts, and then separating this center from the Arab neighborhoods in the outskirts by a settlement crescent that surrounds the Old City from the north, the east and the south, and connects to West Jerusalem by a number of bypass roads.
- b. Cutting direct geographical connection between the Jerusalemites, the town and the mosque, paving the way for the area's population to be replaced by a Jewish presence, considered a necessary condition for the success of the religious and cultural Judaization plan for Jerusalem.
- c. Pushing the Old City's residents, under pressure from the settlers and their attacks and because of the limited and fixed housing area, to leave the city and allow Jewish expansion in it, which, until today, continues to move at a slower pace than the Israeli state had hoped for.



Map 3/6: The Threatened Neighborhoods in the Immediate Area Embracing the Old City (The Holy Basin)



In the neighborhoods embracing the Old City, the Israeli state works according to an extended plan aimed at developing the “Holy Basin.” This plan includes projects to build settlement concentrations, biblical gardens, and touristic ancient shrines, with a preliminary cost estimated at \$100 million.⁷² The neighborhoods of Sheikh Jarrah in the north and al-Bustan in the south are considered today primary regions of activity for this plan.⁷³ In the following, we will shed light on the Israeli activities in these neighborhoods, and on the projects that he is trying to execute and their development during 2009:

a. The Sheikh Jarrah Neighborhood

• Geographic Location

The Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood is located north of the Old City in occupied East Jerusalem. To the north, it borders al-Masharif Mountain; to the east, there is the campus of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem; and to the west, there is the settlement of Ramat Eshkol. This neighborhood’s location is the main reason for this current settlement offensive against it. For, from the Israeli point of view, it separates the Hebrew University from its Jewish surroundings, represents an obstacle to Jewish geographical connection between Jerusalem’s east and west, and overlooks the main road that connects the E1 settlement block, located in East Jerusalem to West Jerusalem. Moreover, according to the “Holy Basin” plan, it is decided that this neighborhood should represent the northern boundary of what is called “the Jewish heart” of the city.

Jewish planners have chosen to start the plan to Judaize the area embracing the Old City from this neighborhood for a number of considerations. Most prominent among them is the presence of legal loopholes in the registration of some of its properties and in the determination of their owners’ identities, the small number of its inhabitants when compared to other neighborhoods, and the large size of its buildings. Furthermore, they view the experiment of mass expulsion in this neighborhood as an indicator of the experiment’s success or failure. Because if they fail to achieve their goals in the presence of all these advantageous factors, they would not be able to succeed in more crowded neighborhoods with smaller and legally registered properties, such as al-Bustan neighborhood.⁷⁴ This neighborhood is sought after because of three hot focal points: the Sheikh Jarrah Housing, the Shepherd Hotel, and Karm al-Mufti.



• Settlement Ambitions

The Sheikh Jarrah Neighborhood Housing: the Sheikh Jarrah model housing consists of 28 housing units. Its land was originally owned by the Jordanian government. However, at the beginning of the fifties, Jordan donated it to UNRWA to build on it 28 housing units to shelter a number of Jerusalemite families who had sought refuge there after having left the Qatamon neighborhood in the city's west. Then the agreement stipulated that after three years, i.e., on 15/10/1959, the ownership of the properties would go to the refugee families residing in them.

The occupation's attempts to infiltrate the neighborhood began in 1972, when a number of Orthodox Jewish settlers claimed their ownership of the land on which the Sheikh Jarrah housing stands, situated in the western part of Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood that has an area of 18 donums. They brought legal action before the Israeli courts to corroborate their ownership, claiming that this land was originally a Jewish cemetery, taking advantage of the absence of any document that would prove the ownership of this housing's land in the Ottoman registers. In 1996, they reached a settlement in court that proves their ownership of the land, but considers the people living there protected tenants. In the beginning of 2008, the religious settlers sold the land to a big investment company called Nahalat Shimon, which, in turn, presented a plan to build 200 settlement units in place of the existing Sheikh Jarrah Housing that contains 28 houses.⁷⁵

According to the new plan, the occupation authorities officially served notification to the 28 houses' residents to the effect that they should vacate their homes in preparation for their demolition, in order to start the project of building the new settlement units. Indeed, the residents' expulsion began on 9/11/2008, when the Israeli police evicted the family of Um Kamel al-Kurd from their home in the Housing. Shortly after their eviction, the family erected a protest tent in the place, which later became a center for the resistance activities in Jerusalem. However, the Israelis succeeded in removing it after tearing it down more than seven times, and exerting pressure on the owners of the land on which it stood. On 2/8/2009, the Israeli police evicted the 53 members of the families of al-Ghawi and Hanoun from their homes in the Housing. In addition, similar to what al-Kurd family had done, the two families took residence in tents close to the Housing, however, the occupation didn't succeed in removing them. On 3/11/2009, the Israeli police helped a group of settlers occupy the house of Rifqa al-Kurd in the same Housing, the event that ended the year 2009 with eight homes evicted by the Israelis of the 28 in the

Housing. This can be considered a relapse in the efforts of the occupation that used to suppose that, of all the others, this land is the easiest prey, and a most suitable start for the Judaization process of the neighborhood and all its surrounding area. Yet simultaneously, it succeeded in imposing a state of isolation on the protest activities in this neighborhood by repeatedly tearing down protest tents, keeping away resistance symbols, preventing them from visiting the area, and arresting a number of activists responsible for the protest tent. If no help comes to these isolated families thrown in the open, their steadfastness will not hold.

The Shepherd Hotel: the Shepherd Hotel is situated in the northern part of Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. It was originally owned by Hajj Amin al-Husayni, Jerusalem's Mufti and head of the Supreme Islamic Council during the British mandate. In 1985, the occupation state claimed its ownership of the hotel, basing on the Absentees' Property Law and on its capacity as the Custodian of the Absentees' properties, (in spite of the fact that Hajj Amin al-Husayni's heirs were born in Jerusalem, and they did not leave it either in 1948 or in 1967). It procured an order to tear it down so to establish a settlement complex on its land consisting of 90 residential units. Following a long silence, the year 2009 witnessed a revival of this issue; as, on 7/7/2009, the occupation's Jerusalem Municipality certified the preliminary plan to establish a settlement outpost consisting of 20 residential units in place of the hotel. Sources in the Municipality claimed that the Jewish millionaire Irving Moskowitz had purchased the hotel along with the land on which it stood from the Custodian of the Absentees' properties; subsequently, he is presenting a regulatory plan for a land that he owns, and there is no justification for rejecting his request.⁷⁶

Karm al-Mufti Land: this land is situated in the middle of Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood; and from the east, it is adjacent to Sheikh Jarrah Housing. It has an area of 20 donums and it is owned by the Arab Hotels Company of East Jerusalem. Since they took control of East Jerusalem in 1967, the occupation authorities announced their intention to expropriate this land. In their planning and zoning schemes, they classified it as a green and open space, where building on it and making use of it are not allowed. In 2000, the land's owners submitted a request to the Jerusalem Planning and Building Committee for building a hotel, a convention center and a cultural center on their land. At the time, this department acknowledged that the request presenter held the ownership right to the land. The Israeli Interior Ministry allowed the Arab company to go ahead with its construction plans, after



its ownership of the land was established. However, it became known later that the Land Registration Department in the occupation authority had granted the American Jewish millionaire Irving Moskowitz permission to present a design to build 250 settlement units on the same land, i.e., Karm al-Mufti Land, two years before it gave permission to the Arab Hotels Company of East Jerusalem to build a hotel on it, that is in 1998.⁷⁷

In June of 2000, after the plans of Moskowitz and Ateret Cohanim were revealed, the lawyer of the Palestinian company submitted to the Jerusalem Planning and Building Committee a request to reject Moskowitz' request because its presenter does not own the land, as it is owned by the Jerusalemite company. At that time, the lawyers were informed that the request has been dropped.

At the end of 2006, the Arab Hotels Company of East Jerusalem obtained a ruling from the Magistrates' Court ordering the eviction of a Palestinian who had seized the land by force. However, on the date set for eviction, the Amidar Company, in the name of the Israel Lands Administration (ILA), presented the court with a request to stop the eviction order. It became known later that this Palestinian was working for Ateret Cohanim.

Few months later, and in March of 2007, the ILA issued an order to expropriate the Karm al-Mufti Land, and proclaimed that it had rented it years ago to Ateret Cohanim to "cultivate it"; and that was in exchange for a very trivial amount of no more than \$10 per donum, while the real value of the land is estimated at tens of millions.⁷⁸ The year 2009 did not record any development worth mentioning regarding the matter of this land; however, it is clear that it is closely linked to that of the Shepherd Hotel, because the plan for the settlement complex shows that it extends over all the area of Karm al-Mufti and that of the Shepherd Hotel as well. It is likely that this matter will be brought up once again during 2010; actually, work on the settlement to be established on this land may start in 2010.

b. Al-Bustan Neighborhood

• The Geographic Location

Al-Bustan neighborhood is located in the middle of the Silwan Suburb, south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, bordered on the north by Wadi Jahannam, from the south by al-Thawry neighborhood, from the east by the Silwan neighborhood, and from the west by Wadi Hilwah neighborhood. This neighborhood has an area of 70 donums,

and forms part of Basin 29986, according to the British mandate organization. The ownership of all this neighborhood's lands and properties is purely Palestinian Jerusalemite. From the Israeli point of view, it constitutes an extension of the "City of David," which is being built by settlement organizations in collaboration with the Israeli government, at the base of Wadi Hilwah neighborhood.⁷⁹

• Settlement Ambitions

On 11/11/2004, Uri Shitrit, Jerusalem's Chief engineer, issued a directive to demolish all of al-Bustan neighborhood's buildings to enable expansion of the "King's Valley" archeological park. In early 2005, the municipality began to carry out the directive, and residents of the neighborhood began to receive demolition orders and charges filed against them for building without a permit. In fact, during that year, the municipality demolished two houses in the neighborhood.

However, by the end of 2005, the occupation government retracted the plan after coming under international pressure. In addition, al-Bustan neighborhood residents presented a petition to the Attorney General of the occupation government demanding a halt to the destruction of the neighborhood. Subsequently, Jerusalem's mayor announced the retraction of the plan and allowed the residents to propose a plan that meets their development needs. In August 2008, the neighborhood's residents presented their plan to the Jerusalem Municipality. However, Jerusalem municipal engineer, Shlomo Eshkol, informed them that the plan they had presented would not be considered in the immediate future, and that the municipality was proceeding with the plan to build a "national park" on the site. He made them an offer of willingly vacating their homes in exchange for getting paid compensations or being relocated to another area of Jerusalem, such as Beit Hanina in the City's north. The neighborhood's residents rejected this offer outright. The Jerusalem Municipality informed them later of its rejection of the plan that they had presented. On Saturday evening of 21/2/2009, the municipality handed 134 Jerusalemite families, consisting of 1,500 persons and living in 88 buildings in al-Bustan neighborhood, orders to vacate their homes in preparation for their demolition and the establishment of a public garden in their place called "King David Garden."⁸⁰

This mass notification stirred political reactions that brought pressure to bear on the Israeli authorities, in particular from Jordan, EU and the US. It also stirred public reactions in Jerusalem and in some Arab countries. To absorb the shock,



the Israeli authorities postponed the execution of the eviction orders. Then, after political pressures had died down, and in July of 2009, Israel transferred the ownership of 14 of the 88 buildings, which occupy an area of 28 donums, to a Jewish settlement organization to start building the Biblical Park.⁸¹ So in the future, when the occupation faces difficulties in vacating homes, it will resort to turning the matter into a dispute over ownership that the occupation courts would resolve partially, in a way that would let the matter of taking over the neighborhood pass quickly without political or media fanfare.

c. Other Plans Affecting the Other Neighborhoods that Embrace the Old City

In early 2009, Ateret Cohanim submitted a plan to the Jerusalem Planning and Building Committee to build a Jewish neighborhood, having an area of six donums, on the ruins of more than 60 homes in Batn al-Hawa neighborhood in the town of Silwan, south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.⁸²

On 5/3/2009, and after less than a month of delivering the demolition orders for al-Bustan neighborhood, the Israeli authorities handed over new eviction and demolition orders for 34 apartments in the adjacent al-‘Abbasiya neighborhood, south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.⁸³

Later, and on 27/4/2009, the Hebrew newspaper *Haaretz* reported that the Jerusalem Municipality has begun building a new housing quarter in the heart of the town of al-Sawahra, south of Jerusalem. It added that the plan involved the construction of three building, comprising 62–66 apartments. It pointed out that the building plan was approved in 2000, when the past Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was Jerusalem’s mayor and encouraged Jewish settlement in the heart of Palestinian neighborhoods. When done, the Jewish quarter will be part of the southern belt that isolates the neighborhoods embracing the Old City.

Furthermore, in June 2009, the occupation approved the establishment of a commercial center and a huge hotel on a 23 thousand square meters (23 donums) in Herod’s Gate neighborhood, adjacent to the northern walls of the Old City.⁸⁴ Then on 18/11/2009, A cornerstone was laid to mark the construction of 105 new housing units in the settlement of Nof Zion in the east Jerusalem neighborhood of Jabel Mukaber, in Silwan, south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. With this new expansion, this settlement will become connected to the East Talpiot settlement.⁸⁵

On 31/12/2009, Al-Maqdese for Society Development (MSD) revealed a map issued on 28/12/2009 by the Jerusalem Municipality. By this, the Municipality plans to demolish hundreds of Palestinian residency buildings in Silwan and other neighborhoods as Al-Bustan, and Al-Thouri, south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. The map shows that 224 residency buildings in East Jerusalem that are threatened with demolition by Jerusalem Municipality, while 88 residency buildings will be demolished in al-Bustan neighborhood.⁸⁶

3. Municipal Boundaries

Since its occupation of Jerusalem was completed in 1967, Israel began its quest to turn the city, with all its aspects, into a purely Jewish capital. The first concern that preoccupied the Zionist planner was the way to expand Jerusalem's borders to the east, in order to annex as large an area as possible from the recently occupied territories, while keeping the greatest number of this land's inhabitants outside these borders. The other consideration was his concern about security. The Jerusalem Municipality's map, showing an area of 142 km² for the two parts of the city, came primarily to fulfill these two criteria. Thus, the occupation annexed the heights that surround the city and all the roads and entrances leading to it, and excluded the areas and concentrations with high Palestinian population density. Thus, in the City's north, it annexed Beit Exa and Bir Nabala, which have few Palestinian residents, while it excluded in the south, the city of Bethlehem and the two towns of Beit Sahour and Beit Jala, because of their high Palestinian population density.⁸⁷

Nevertheless, Israel was not able to achieve its goal of having a city with an absolute Jewish majority. Furthermore, all the means employed, of expulsion, home demolitions, deprivation of services, and imposition of taxes did not succeed in achieving this goal either. Thus, and toward the end of the nineties of the last century, the occupation proposed once again the idea of changing the outline of the city's limits. Several proposals were made in this respect (Greater Jerusalem, Metropolitan Jerusalem, etc.).⁸⁸ Until there came the Separation Wall "Jerusalem envelope," the building of which started during Ariel Sharon's government in 2002, to draw the awaited final outline of the city's boundaries in a way that would include the Adumim settlement bloc in the east, the Giv'on bloc in the northwest, and the Etzion bloc in the southwest. These blocs dominate an area estimated at 161 km², meaning that their size exceeds the original size of Municipal Jerusalem, while the total number of settlers living in them do not exceed 69,900 settlers.



Today, Israel strives to consecrate this annexation and consolidate Jerusalem's new city limits. It is intensifying construction in these settlements and connecting them to Jerusalem's center by way of a transportation network that includes highways, light rail and buses, to facilitate movement from and to settlements.

During 2009, a report by the Negotiation Affairs Department revealed that the Israeli government has approved a plan to build a tunnel in the region of East al-Sawahra, which would connect the Ma'ale Adumim bloc to the settlements south of Jerusalem through the Eastern Ring Road, and asserted that this tunnel would be parallel to the Mount of Olives tunnel, which will connect the Adumim bloc in the east directly to West Jerusalem, to facilitate the movement of settlers and settlement expansion.⁸⁹

On 7/5/2009, a report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs-occupied Palestinian territory (OCHA-oPt) revealed that the Israeli authorities intend to build a new settlement with 20 thousand housing units south of occupied Jerusalem; in addition to building seven thousand new housing units in the settlements of Bat Ayin and Geva'ot in the Etzion settlement bloc.⁹⁰ Allegra Pacheco, Deputy Chief of OCHA-oPt said that they had gathered information that indicated that Israel plans to build about 30 thousand new settlement units in WB and Jerusalem.⁹¹

On 23/10/2009, Dr. Hassan Khater, the secretary-general of the Islamic-Christian Front for Defending Jerusalem and its Holy Sites declared that the occupation state has allocated more than \$50 million for the expansion of Ma'ale Adumim and Har Homa settlements.⁹²

In January 2010, the Hebrew newspaper *Yerushalayim* reported that Planning and Building Committee of Jerusalem Municipality made a decision to turn 660 donums of al-'Isawiyah town lands, north of the neighborhoods embracing Jerusalem, into a national Biblical garden, and that through a measure that denied the town the ability to expand and build on its own lands. If we link this news to that of reviving the "Eastern Gate" settlement project, planned to be built on the lands of 'Anata, al-'Isawiyah villages, and al-Za'im and al-Tur villages, on a two thousand donums area, consisting of four thousand housing units,⁹³ it becomes apparent to us that the occupation state has taken a

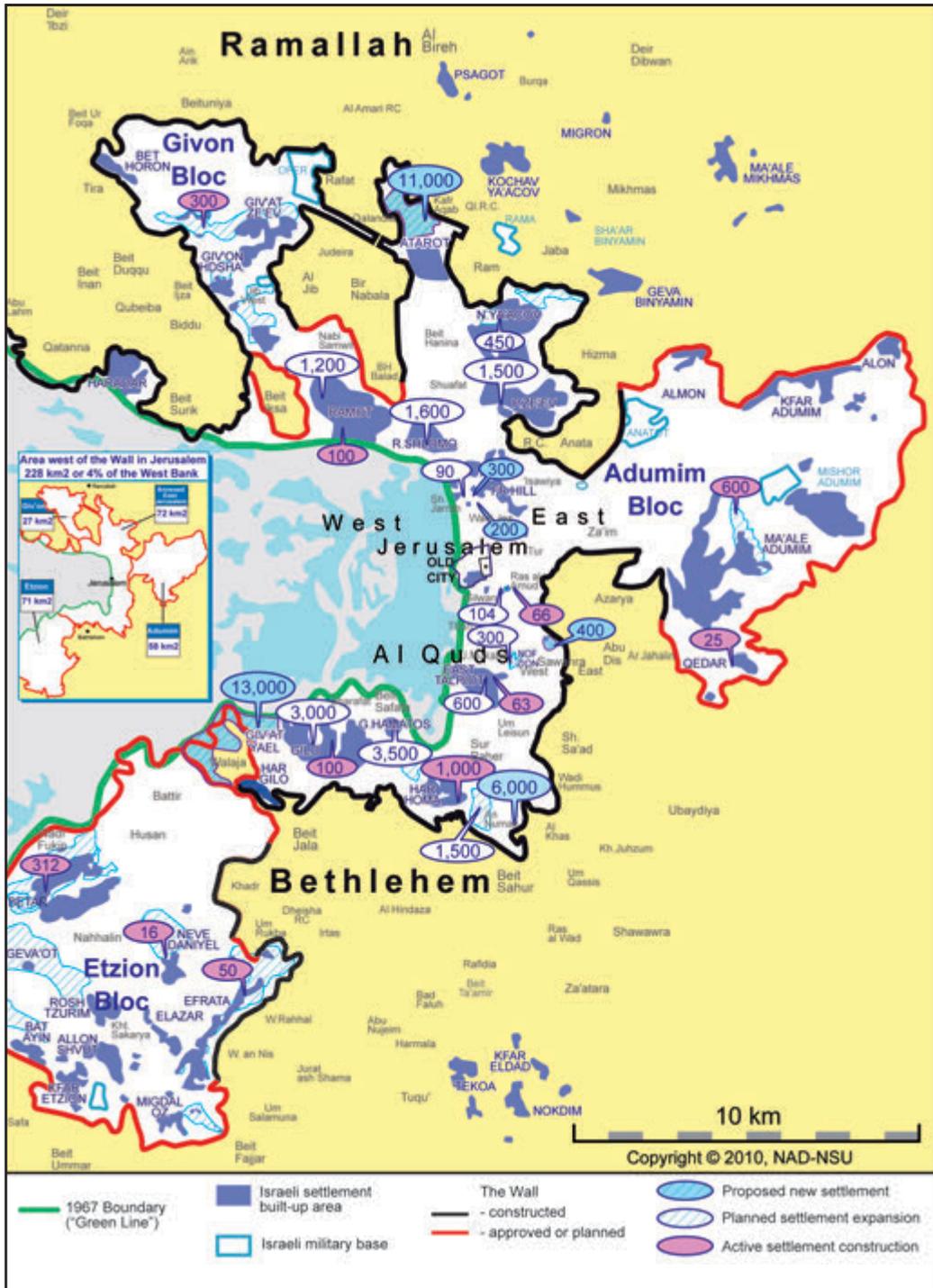
significant step toward tightening the settlement belt around the neighborhoods embracing the Old City from the north and the east, where it will achieve a full land connection between the E1 bloc and the campus of the Hebrew University. When this project is complete, and if the occupation continued work on it, communication between Palestinian neighborhoods in the north of Jerusalem (Beit Hanina, Shu'fat) and the neighborhoods embracing the Old City would become almost completely severed.

All these plans and developments in the state of the settlements, when added to the fact that work has been completed on most sections of the Separation Wall around Jerusalem, will not leave room for talks about exchanging lands in the city in any future peace settlement between the PA and Israel. That is because the Palestinian neighborhoods at Jerusalem's periphery will not only be surrounded by the Separation Wall, they will be completely cut off from the Old City and the neighborhoods surrounding it. They will become more like besieged vesicles, without any geographical connection to their external Palestinian surroundings, and with no connection between them and Jerusalem's center. So how can one imagine the PA having control over neighborhoods that are completely cut off one from the other? Rather how can it achieve a connection between the WB and the Jerusalemite neighborhoods at the city's periphery inside the Separation Wall?

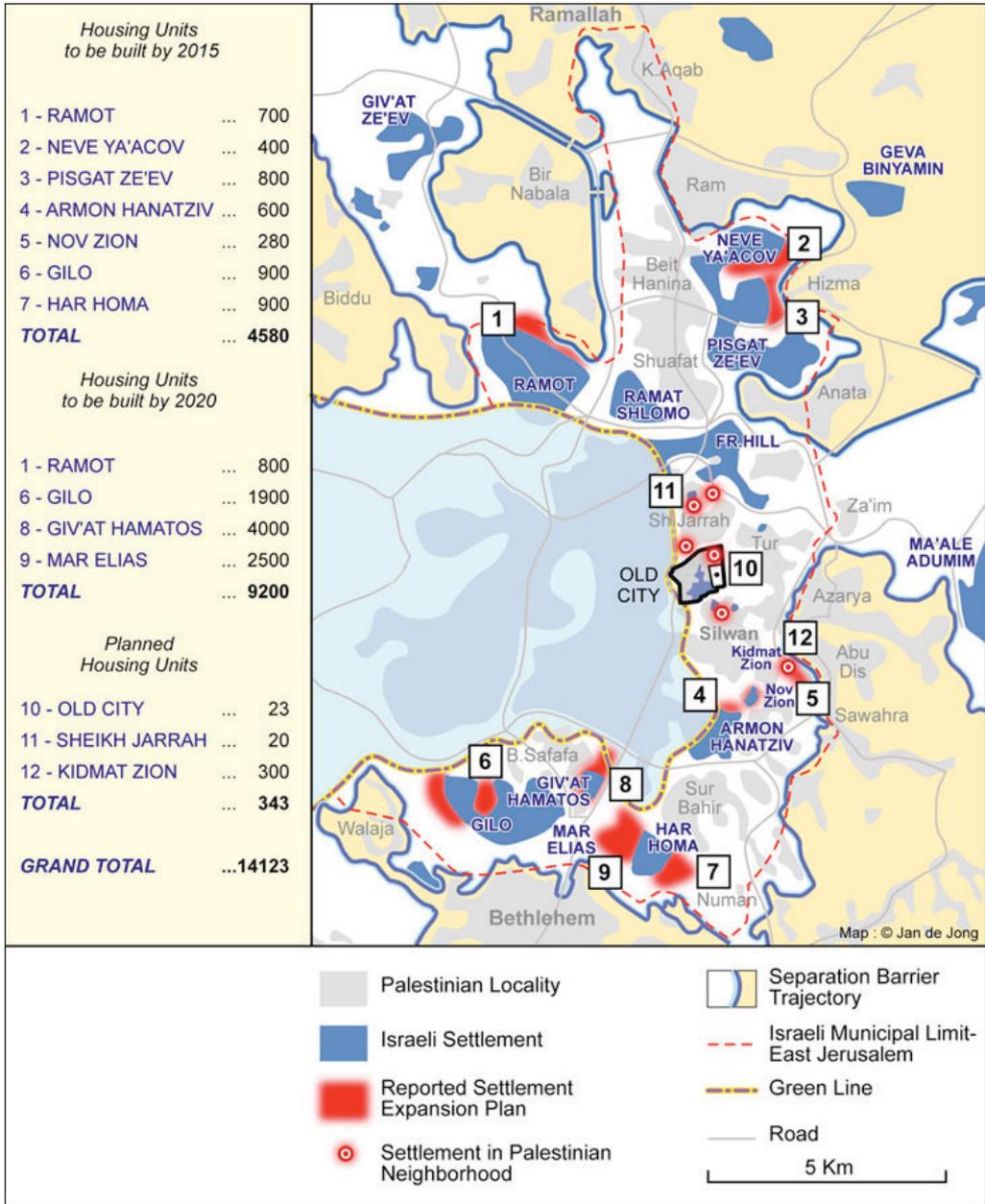
In view of the facts on the ground, what we are witnessing is the Israeli authorities having established a reality in Jerusalem that practically will not be part of any discussion regarding any future peace settlement with the PA; no matter what size are the pressures that may be exerted on Israel or the amount of hope that the Palestinian negotiator may place on a future exchange of land that disregards the reality on the ground. Furthermore, any intended "exchange" will not mean in reality more than facilitating passage between the besieged housing vesicles inside Jerusalem and their external surroundings in WB, through checkpoints that are under the complete control of Israel, opening their gates at will.



Map 4/6: Settlement Activities in Jerusalem, March 2010



Map 5/6: Reported Settlement Expansion Plans in East Jerusalem, November 2009



Fourth: The Struggle over Jerusalem's Cultural Identity

1. Judaizing Names and Landmarks

Since its occupation was completed in 1967, Jerusalem did not witness a campaign to change its names and landmarks such as the one that took place during 2009. This came in parallel with the rise in calls by Israeli politicians to consolidate the Jewish character of the state. The Judaization campaign in Jerusalem rose in intensity in view of the occupation's endeavor to decide its fate unilaterally, seeing that the Arab-Islamic character remained dominant in the city in spite of the passing of 43 years since completing its occupation.

To be sure, Israel's efforts focused on Judaizing the names and landmarks of the Old City that represents the main cultural symbol of Jerusalem, whether in its names, landmarks, or in its architectural style. In a report it published on 11/3/2009, *Al-Aqsa* Foundation for Endowment and Heritage observed unprecedented projects of Judaization and change in the Old City,⁹⁴ which included its walls, gates and inner-city neighborhoods, its adjacent surroundings and *al-Aqsa* Mosque. The most noticeable of these projects: finishing work on a garden and a public park under the name of the army road, adjacent to the northwest corner of the Old City; establishing a similar park at the farthest northeastern corner of the town; and, in Herod's Gate area, new paving was done with Herodian-style blocks, which the occupation claims were prevalent in the era of the "Second Temple."⁹⁵

This is in addition to restoring once again David's Gate in the "Herodian style," ending work on turning a number of areas around the Old City's walls into public "Biblical parks," announcing the start of restoration and development works on Jaffa and Herod's Gates so they would also acquire in their architectural design the "Herodian style," and the announcement of a plan to change the features of the properties and shops along al-Wad Street, west of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

In its report, *Al-Aqsa* Foundation for Endowment and Heritage indicated that the occupation authorities charged the tasks of executing the projects of Judaizing the landmarks to a number of bodies. The most important bodies are the Jerusalem Municipality, the Jerusalem Development Authority (JDA) and IAA, and earmarked almost \$150 million for implementing these projects.

On 5/4/2009, the Israeli authorities stole one of the biggest ancient stones in the region of the Islamic Umayyad palaces in the southeast corner of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, and placed it in the “Archeological Garden” facing the Israeli Knesset, claiming that it is one of the stones used in the building of the “Second Temple.”⁹⁶ In December 2009, Israel started excavations in the space facing the Umayyad palaces area; its vehicles gathering all the Islamic artifacts that they could find in the place and transporting them to garbage dumps near the Ma‘ale Adumim settlement, east of occupied Jerusalem.⁹⁷

On the level of Judaizing names, and on 13/7/2009, Yisrael Katz, the Israeli Transportation Minister, gave orders to change the names of towns and cities written on signs and billboards, scattered in the main streets and roads, over the entire territories occupied in 1948.⁹⁸ This decree stirred strong public and political condemnations from 1948 Palestinians; but that did not stop its implementation. On 19/7/2009, Dr. Hassan Khater, the secretary-general of the Islamic-Christian Front for Defending Jerusalem and its Holy Sites, declared that Israel had indeed changed the names of thousands of places and archeological landmarks in Jerusalem.⁹⁹ Some of the most prominent names that the occupation has changed during the last year were: using the name “Yerushalayim” in place of Jerusalem on all the road signs in Israel, changing the name of Wadi Hilwah Street, south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, to “Ma‘ale David,” and Wadi al-Rababi, south of *al-Aqsa* Mosque to “Valley of Hinnom,” then it started to change the names of streets and neighborhoods in the periphery of *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

Moreover, 2009 witnessed a noticeable development on this plane, as Hebrew names of numerous places began to replace Arabic names in the maps of the two websites on the Internet Wikimapia and Google, including the name of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, the main name of which became the “Temple Mount” and not *al-Aqsa* Mosque or the Noble Sanctuary (*al-Haram al-Sharif*).

2. Promoting Jerusalem as a Jewish City

In the framework of their endeavor to efface Jerusalem’s Arab and Islamic identity, the Israeli authorities are working on promoting the city as one with a common Judeo-Christian history; doing that by connecting various Jewish tourist sites to Christian archeological and religious sites. For that end, the Israeli authorities exert total control over the sector of tourist guidance in Jerusalem. Therefore, they do not allow tourist guides to work except under their supervision,



organizing tours of the city along a track that disregards Islamic holy sites,¹⁰⁰ and depicts Islamic presence in the city as contingent and separate from that of the Christian and Jewish presence.

The Israeli authorities are also working on promoting the “Jewishness” of the city by holding year round festivals and celebrations on Jewish religious and national occasions and holidays. On 7/3/2009, Reuven Pinsky, Jerusalem Development Authority Director, announced the Municipality’s endeavor to celebrate festivals throughout the year for the sake of bringing in tourists at different times and not only during preferred seasons, which extend to July, August and the holidays. Plans for the coming years include investment of eight million Shekels (\$1.93 million) to promote the city touristically the year round.¹⁰¹

The most notable festival of 2009 was that during the period 10–16/6/2009 and was entitled The Jerusalem Festival of Light 2009. The Jerusalem Municipality, East Jerusalem Development Company and the Ministry of Tourism in Israel were among the organizers and the festival was attended by thousands of tourists. It featured noisy musical and religious celebrations in the square adjacent to the southern wall of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, in the region of the Umayyad palaces, in addition to light shows at the city gates and in Jerusalem’s citadel in which Jewish symbols were heavily displayed.¹⁰²

3. Jerusalem, the Capital of Arab Culture

In 2006, and during the 15th session of the Arab Culture Ministers Council in Muscat, the Iraqi Minister of Culture asked that Baghdad’s turn, as the Capital of Arab Culture scheduled for 2009, be postponed until 2013, in view of the city’s current circumstances. Immediately after, the Palestinian Minister of Culture at the time, Dr. ‘Atallah Abu al-Subh suggested that Jerusalem be chosen as the Capital of Arab Culture for 2009, the assembly agreed to this suggestion unanimously.

In March of 2009, the PA and Jerusalem’s civil leaders started activities inside the city to celebrate Jerusalem as the 2009 Capital of Arab Culture. However, Israel used force to ban all activities related to the event, after the Israeli Internal Security Minister Avraham (Avi) Dichter had signed a decree prohibiting the PA from conducting celebrations on this occasion.¹⁰³ On 21/3/2009, on the day the celebration was scheduled to start, the Israeli forces

raided the Burj al-Laqlaq area in Jerusalem's Old City and arrested a number of those in charge of Jerusalem's celebration as the Capital of Arab Culture. Furthermore, one day before the opening, Israeli authorities spread more than two thousand policemen all over the city to halt any activities related to the celebration.

On 23/3/2009, concurrently with the announcement in Bethlehem of the start of the celebration, the Israeli forces stormed the tent of Um Kamel al-Kurd in Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood and arrested Sheikh Ra'id Salah and a number of Jerusalemite personalities to keep them from announcing the launching of the Jerusalemite people organization to celebrate Jerusalem as the Capital of Arab Culture.¹⁰⁴ On the same day, the Israeli forces broke into eight Jerusalemite institutions that were organizing events on this occasion, arrested about 20 Palestinians, prevented gatherings of schoolchildren, and made threats against any person who tries to participate in these celebrations.¹⁰⁵

The Israeli authorities continued their policy of prohibition and arrest throughout the year. They also prevented the convening of a press conference by the Jerusalemite people organization that was to be held on 28/1/2010 in the Legacy Hotel in Jerusalem, in which it planned to declare Jerusalem a permanent Capital of Arab Culture, and to call for its twinning with Doha, the Arab Culture Capital for 2010.¹⁰⁶

In an attempt to confront the Israel's constraint and repression of any activity related to celebrating Jerusalem as the Capital of Arab Culture, a group of civil society institutions and bodies in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria established the Civil Campaign for Celebrating al-Quds the Capital of Arab Culture 2009. The idea behind this campaign was to move the celebration of Jerusalem from Jerusalem itself to all the Arab capitals. This campaign has organized thousands of activities and events in Arab countries, in particular in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. The most notable of these activities were the Jerusalem award for literary and academic distinction, marches of departure to the Blessed *al-Aqsa* Mosque, al-Salahi Scene Festival in Damascus, and a day of solidarity "Greetings to Jerusalem," which was held simultaneously in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and GS.



Fifth: Solidarity with Jerusalem Events

The public and official interaction with Jerusalem is an indication of the extent of the Arab and Muslim interest in the City's suffering, and its standing in their priorities as peoples and regimes. Simultaneously, it is an indicator for the occupier, through which he can measure his ability to go ahead with his Judaization plan, for he often links the Judaization measures and size to the size of the objections that these measures may stir in Palestine, the region, and the Arab and Muslim world. The lesser the solidarity and reactions are, the more the occupier add to his Judaization measures and their speed.

The Palestinians are always at the forefront of any reactions to events in Jerusalem. The actions taking place outside of Palestine were always directly proportional to the size and fierceness of the confrontations in the Occupied Land. This equation was consecrated all through the occupation years. However, 2009 has witnessed a weak Arabic and Islamic public sympathy with events in Jerusalem, in spite of the fact that this year was one of the worst in the City's history, since its occupation became complete in 1967. The divided internal Palestinian situation and the intense pursuit of the resistance in the WB made it hard for Palestinians to confront in a proper manner the assault to which Jerusalem is being subjected. This reflected negatively on public sympathy with Jerusalem, in both the Arab and Islamic worlds, with the exception of Turkey in which official and public interest in Jerusalem's plight have risen during 2009.

On the Arabic level, the year 2009 did not register any events, stances, or large scale public demonstrations of solidarity with Jerusalem, with the exception of three main events. The first took place in September 2009, when the Civil Campaign for Celebrating al-Quds the Capital of Arab Culture 2009 organized marches of departure to the blessed *al-Aqsa* Mosque, with the participation of thousands in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. These events included organizing big marches aimed at performing prayers at the closest border point to occupied Palestine. These marches constituted a new form of rallying the public and creating an impact. The second event took place in October 2009, the month that witnessed repeated storming of *al-Aqsa* Mosque by ultra-Orthodox Jews and the occupation security forces. These events resulted in public protests in a number of Arab countries, the biggest of which took place in Yemen, Algeria and Sudan, following a call by

Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi on 5/10/2009 to make the following Friday, 9/10/2009, a day of anger in support of *al-Aqsa* Mosque and the holy sites. The third event was the al-Quds International Forum, organized by the Jerusalem committee's Bayt Mal al-Quds Acharif (Jerusalem's Treasury) Agency," held in the Moroccan capital Rabat on 28–29/10/2009.

On the Islamic level, sympathy with events in Jerusalem was no larger or more effective, with the exception of the activities that Turkey has witnessed, as two conferences were held in Istanbul in April and May in support of Palestine and Jerusalem, in which some Jerusalemite personalities and delegations participated, in addition to Sheikh Ra'id Salah. On 5 and 27/10/2009, Istanbul was the setting for great demonstrations, during which the Israeli Consulate in the city was surrounded in protest of the repeated storming of *al-Aqsa* Mosque by religious extremists and Israeli security forces.

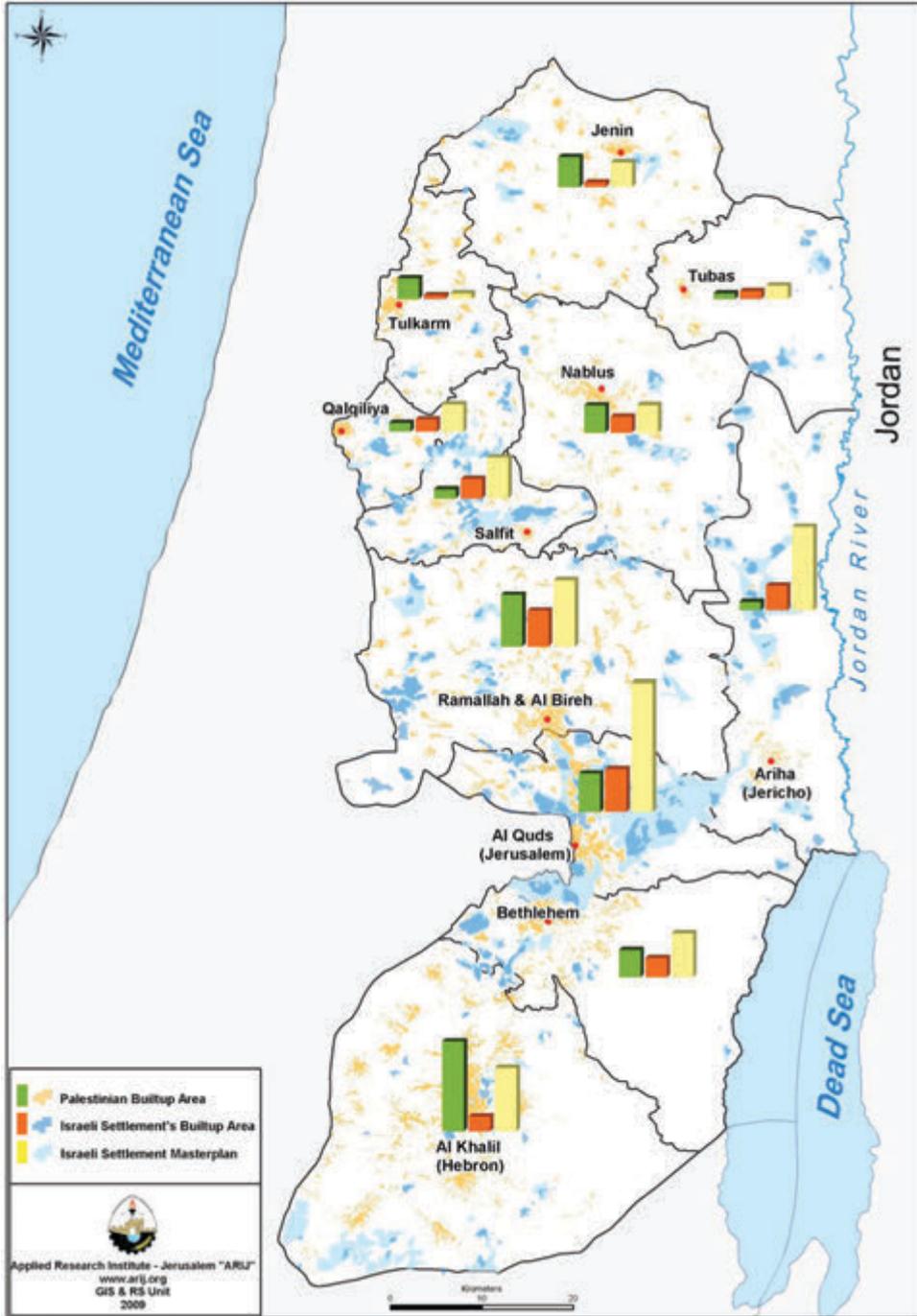
Yet in general, the Arabic and Islamic interaction with Jerusalem's cause was below what is needed, for neither its magnitude nor its impact reached a level that would deter the occupation from going ahead with its plan to Judaize the city and dominate it. It was mainly confined to sympathy with *al-Aqsa* Mosque and what it is being subjected to, without paying attention to what Jerusalem's residents are subjected to, and what is happening to the city of growing settlement, expulsion and laying hands on Palestinian properties; in spite of the fact that these actions may have an impact on the future of the struggle in Jerusalem, equal in size to storming and assaulting *al-Aqsa* Mosque.

Sixth: Israeli Settlement Expansion

The Israeli occupation authorities were greatly successful in imposing the existence of settlements on the WB, specifically in the governorates that are considered of strategic importance to Israel. In five of the 11 Palestinian governorates, the areas occupied by Israeli settlements exceed the area populated by Palestinians. These governorates are Jerusalem, Jericho, al-Aghwar, Qalqilya, Salfit and Tubas.¹⁰⁷



Map 6/6: Israeli Settlements Built-up Area Versus Palestinian Built-up Area in WB Governorates



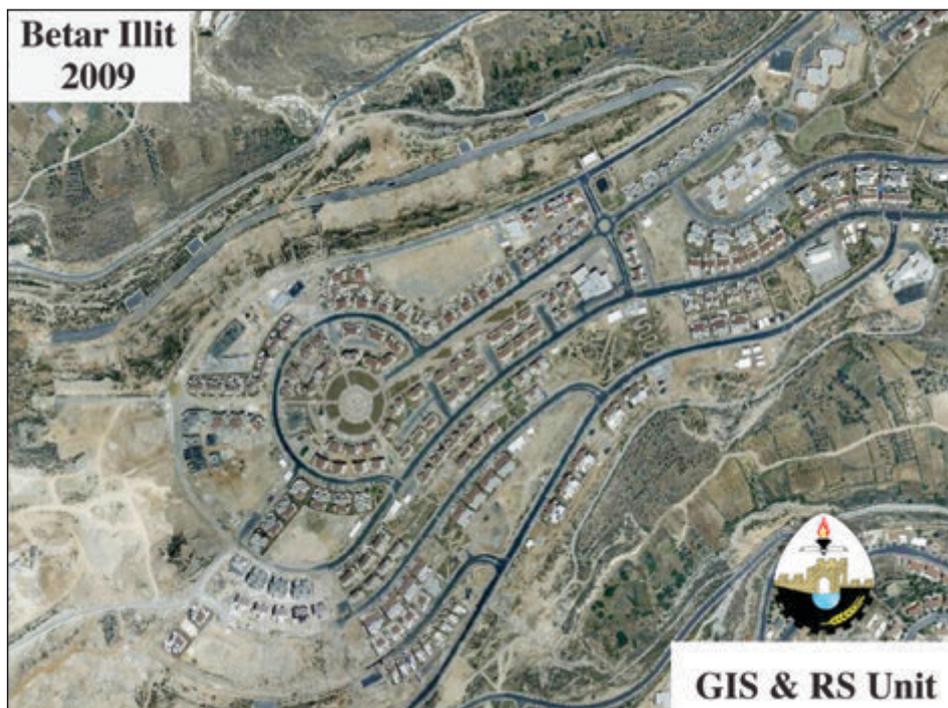
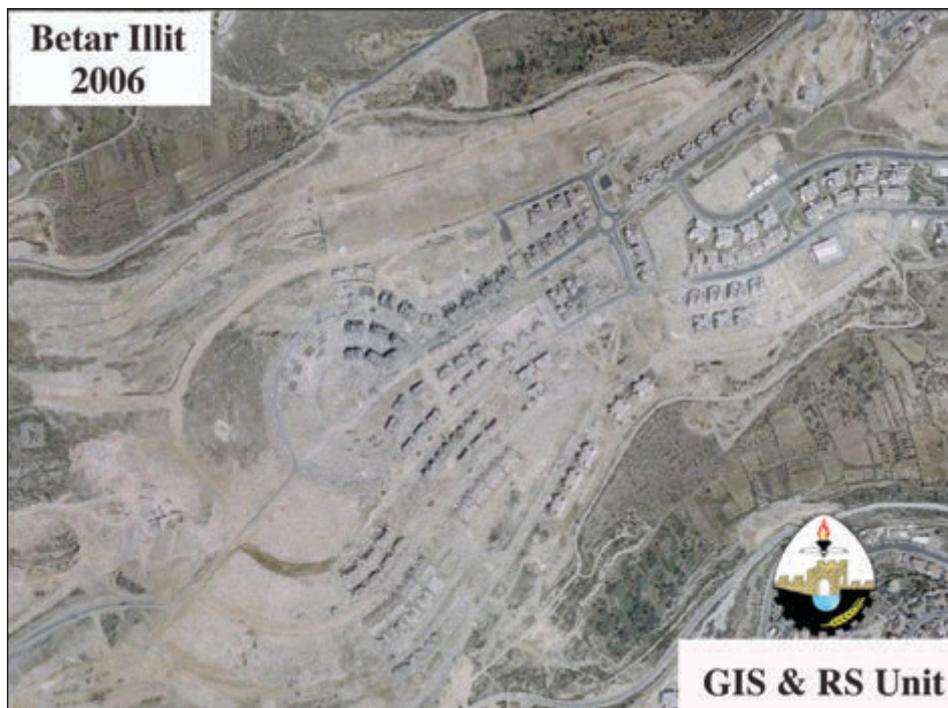
Since the start of the peace process in 1993, Israeli settlement in the WB intensified in an unprecedented manner; as the number of settlements and settlers multiplied to total today 199 settlements and more than 580 thousand Israeli settlers, including 236 thousand settlers residing in 34 Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the areas occupied by settlement construction during that period have grown from 69 km² (1.2% of the WB total area) to 189 km² (3.3%) in 2009.¹⁰⁹ Today, settlement jurisdictions cover more than 40% of the WB area.

Of the people living in these settlements, more than 50% belong to the far-right forces; they concentrate in the governorates of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Qalqilya, Salfit, Tubas, Ramallah, Nablus and Hebron. The growth and rise of these forces affect greatly the settlement plan, as they have come to be described as “a state within a state.” The orthodox settlers have turned into an independent group, capable of changing the negotiation rules in the political arena. This made Israeli withdrawal from the WB, according to any settlement reached, a matter of the utmost difficulty; even if the issue is related only to settlements outside the Wall, or to other settlement locations and outposts.

Furthermore, Israeli settlements in the WB have witnessed unprecedented activities during the years (2006–2009), as the construction pace in them has escalated, in spite of repeated warnings by the American administration to Israel to stop settlement building in the WB.

The study conducted by ARIJ in August 2009, accompanied by an analysis of satellite photos taken during the period 2006–2009, indicates that Israel is proceeding with its settlement expansion plans in a race with time, to let it become a fait accompli on the Palestinian soil. In fact, it has built in the Israeli settlements west of the Wall 311 new caravans and 1,416 new buildings, each consisting of several stories. This is in addition to 644 new caravans and 371 new buildings in the Israeli settlements east of the Wall.¹¹⁰ From what preceded, it is apparent that Israel has focused on building in the Israeli settlements situated west of the Wall more than in those to its east; which makes clear its intention to consolidate its control over the settlements west of the Wall, which number 107 and contain more than 80% of the total number of Israeli settlers in the WB, and to assert its control over the Western Segregation Zone, when the building of the Wall is completed. The Israeli settlements in each of the following governorates: Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Salfit and Qalqilya, had the largest share of settlement construction, in comparison to the rest of the governorates in the WB.

An Example of Israeli Settlement Expansion 2006–2009



As for what concerns building expansion in Israeli settlement, the Israel Ministry of Construction and Housing, the Israel Lands Administration and Jerusalem's Municipality issued building permits and tenders for a total of 30,541 new settlement units inside the Israeli settlements in the WB; most of which are centered in the Israeli settlements west of the Wall, specifically, those situated in the governorates of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, which witnessed the granting of permits for 18,190 and 7,649 new settlement units respectively.¹¹¹ Furthermore, the Israeli plans have focused on the Israeli settlements situated within the Israeli Jerusalem Municipality, which was illegally expanded in 1967, at the expense of a number of Palestinian population concentrations east and south of Jerusalem.¹¹²

Among the proposed tenders, there is a plan to build a new settlement neighborhood, northwest of the Efrat settlement south of Bethlehem. In February 2009, the expropriation of more than 1,700 donums of the lands of Khirbet al-Nahlah, al-Khadr and Artas, south of the Bethlehem Governorate, was announced, under the designation of Israeli state-owned lands, for building 2,500 settlement units in the new settlement neighborhood of Givat HaEitam.¹¹³ Moreover, the building of another neighborhood was also announced, to be composed of 1,400 new settlement units, situated one kilometer away from Adam settlement (Geva Binyamin), and would accommodate the settlers of the Migron outpost,¹¹⁴ who number about 200. The Israeli government also proposed a plan to build a new settlement in al-Aghwar region that contains 20 new settlement units in Maskiot settlement, as part of a building plan that includes 180 settlement units that the Israeli government had proposed during 2006, in a step aimed at accommodating more Israeli settlers there.¹¹⁵

During 2009, Israel finished all the preparations for the infrastructure required for the settlement neighborhood in area E1, east of Jerusalem. It started implementing the construction plan, in spite of opposition from the US and the world community to it for 10 years. On 7/9/2009, the groundbreaking ceremony for plan E1, east of Jerusalem took place, attended by some Israeli cabinet ministers, members of the Israeli Knesset, the mayor of Ma'ale Adumim, and the leaders of the settlement Yesha Council. Plan E1 includes the building of 3,900 new settlement units to accommodate 15 thousand Israeli settlers, on 12,500 donums of the lands of al-Tur, al-'Isawiyah, 'Anata and al-'Ayzariyah villages, east of Jerusalem.¹¹⁶

On 18/11/2009, there was another groundbreaking ceremony for the second phase of the Nof Zion settlement, situated on the lands of Silwan, south of



Jerusalem, which will include the construction of 105 new residential units in the settlement. The area on which Nof Zion, with all its four stages, will stand is 1,866 donums. It comprises the construction of 475 settlement units on the lands of Silwan and neighboring villages. At the end of 2009, more than 60 Jewish families were residing in the settlement neighborhood of Nof Zion.¹¹⁷

It is worth mentioning here that, since Netanyahu came to power in Israel toward the end of March 2009, the building of more than 19,100 residential units was approved,¹¹⁸ 81% of them in Jerusalem, and the rest in other settlements in the WB. The Israeli authorities have decided to expand the area of Nirit community inside the occupied WB territories, by building a new residential neighborhood by the name of Nof Hasharon, which, according to Israeli claims, will be part of Alfe Menashe settlement, situated northeast of the new settlement neighborhood¹¹⁹ (see map 7/6).

Oftentimes, Israel has sought to carry out its plans regardless of the peace settlement track; for it considers that, whatever concessions it makes in the occupied WB and GS will be tantamount to surrendering “its legitimate rights” in historic Palestine. Indeed, since the start of the peace process with the Palestinians in 1993, Israel has pursued unilateral steps as it proceeded to make geographical changes on the ground, contrary to what was agreed upon, which is that neither the Israeli nor the Palestinian parties would take steps that would effect changes in permanent status issues (Jerusalem, settlements, borders, water and refugees), which is exactly what Israel did, as it continued settlement building in the WB and Jerusalem. It intentionally imposed new political boundaries by building the Separation Wall, expropriating vast areas of Palestinian lands, seizing groundwater resources in the WB and bringing them under its control, in addition to dismissing the refugees’ right of return to their homeland.

Map 7/6: The New Settlement Neighborhood Nof Hasharon



— Segregation Wall — Armistice Line 1949 (Green Line) — Israeli Settlement



Map 8/6: Israeli Outposts According to the Date of Their Establishment



The epidemic of Israeli settlement outposts, which began to spread in various regions of WB since 1996, has acquired different dimensions since that time. It started with a “Sharonist” call to Jewish settlers to lay hands on sites on Palestinian hills and heights, to prevent handing them over later to Palestinians, within the framework of a future settlement between the two sides. Although the successive Israeli governments in the years 1996–2009 did not enter them in the Israeli classifications under what is called “lawful settlements,” they provided them with a security as well as logistic cover for their existence and continuance, specifically after 2001, when Ariel Sharon came to power and gave free reign to these outposts. According to the latest field readings and analysis of aerial photos (June 2009) by ARIJ, the number of these Israeli outposts has reached 232.

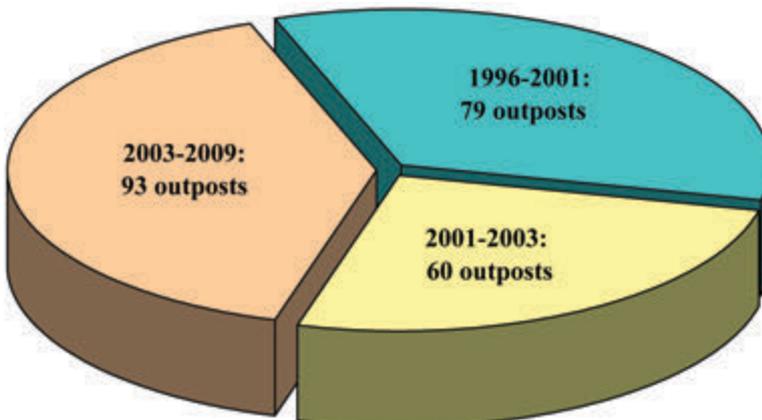
The settlers have established 60 new outposts during the period 2001–2003. The following table indicates the number of outposts established during 1996–2009.

Table 4/6: Number of Outposts Established During 1996–2009¹²⁰

Period	No. of outposts
1996–2001	79
2001–2003	60
2003–2009	93
Total	232

Source: the database of the Geographic Information Systems Unit for 2009–ARIJ.

Number of Outposts Established During 1996–2009



The talk about vacating outposts has become a political ritual practiced by every new Israeli government. Therefore, while there is talk about evacuation in certain regions, permission is given to establish new outposts and expand settlements in other locations. Israel's policy has become that of concentrating settlement expansion operations and establishing outposts in the regions situated behind the Wall that Israel is striving to annex after the Wall's construction is completed. Correspondingly, Israel will allow vacating some settlement outposts in other locations, which were established with the aim of using them for bargaining later, and that is what is taking place today.

All along, Israel sought to deceive the world concerning the truth about settlement outposts, whereas it tried to give legitimacy to some of them by issuing ministerial reports classifying some of them as legitimate and others as illegitimate. In effect, all of these outposts, the same as the settlements and all what is Israeli in the occupied Palestinian land, are illegitimate. They were built on confiscated Palestinian lands with the help and cooperation of various Israeli ministries that, under different claims, keep on providing these outposts with the necessary funds to support them.

It should be mentioned here that the number of these settlement outposts' residents is not made public. However, unofficial statistics issued by the Israeli Peace Now movement state that their number exceeds three thousand settlers.

Seventh: The Israeli Bypass Roads

Israel has intensified its settlement activities in WB and GS throughout its decades of continuous occupation. Almost 120 km², a ratio of 2.2% of the WB area, were expropriated,¹²¹ for building a network of bypass roads, having a length of more than 800 km, to connect Israeli settlements with one another and with Israel. This has contributed to the isolation of Palestinian population concentrations from one another, and to their segmentation. It is worth mentioning here that the real threat of bypass roads is multiplied because of the presence of what is known as the buffer zone that the Israeli army imposes along these roads, usually consisting of 75 meters on either side of the road.

This designation of bypass roads started to appear with the advent of the Oslo Accords in September 1993, to indicate roads built by the Israelis in the occupied

Palestinian territories to link Israeli settlements with one another, with Israel, and with military bases present in the WB.

These bypass roads are divided into three categories:

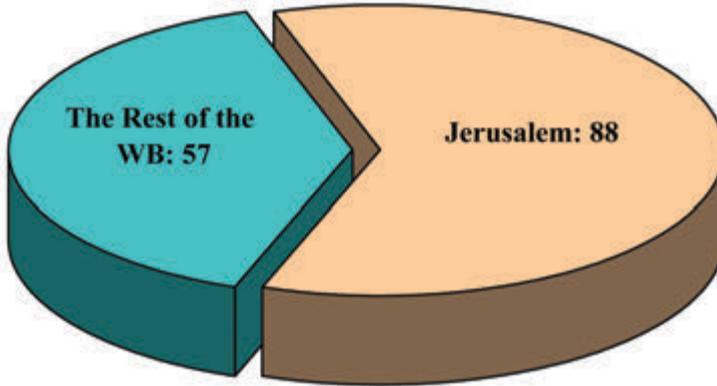
- Roads subject to exclusive Israeli use; and Palestinian traffic on them is completely prohibited.
- Roads that Palestinians may use, but with restrictions or requiring special permits issued by the Israeli Civil Administration.
- Roads that Palestinians may use, but with restricted access at their entrances, due to checkpoints (military barricades) of the Israeli occupation forces.

Eighth: Palestinian House Demolitions

During 2009, the Israeli occupation forces demolished more than 145 Palestinian houses in the WB governorates. Most of these demolitions were centered in the Jerusalem governorate, under the pretext of having been built without a permit, specifically in the villages of East Jerusalem, as Jerusalem falls within the methodical Israeli policy of seeking to Judaize the city, dispossess it of its Palestinian inhabitants and deny them the right to build. Moreover, other WB governorates suffered from the Israeli aggressive attack on Palestinian construction, once again under the pretext of lack of permits. This is so because these houses are located in Area C, which is, according to the interim agreements with the PA, an area placed under Israel's total control. Furthermore, during 2009, the Israeli occupation forces sent notices to the owners of more than 1,450 Palestinian houses, either to stop work on their construction, or face evacuation or demolition; most of these houses were in Jerusalem.¹²² Among Israel's plans for Jerusalem, there is one aimed at the expulsion of more than 1,500 Palestinians from al-Bustan neighborhood in the city, for the sake of building the historic "City of David" on the ruins of their homes, and at the forced expulsion of the Hanoun and al-Ghawi families, consisting of 53 individuals, from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in Jerusalem, because some Jewish groups claim that they own the land and the houses on it.



Number of Homes Demolished in WB During 2009



According to conservative estimates issued by OCHA-oPt, no less than 28% of Palestinian homes in occupied East Jerusalem are threatened with demolition, on the pretext that they violate the Israeli zoning requirements, which means that the homes of more than 60 thousand Palestinians are threatened with demolition at any moment.¹²³

Ninth: The Separation Wall

In September 2007, it was revealed that changes in the Wall's path in WB were approved in April of the same year,¹²⁴ contrary to what was approved in April 2006. This has happened in spite of the fact that three years had passed since the decision by the Hague International Court of Justice was issued in 2004 that upheld the illegality of the Israeli Separation Wall, and recommended that Israel removes the Wall and compensate the Palestinians for the damages they had incurred due to its construction.¹²⁵ Obviously, the high-level political meetings between the Israeli and Palestinian sides had no effect on restraining the plans of the Israeli army, which continued with its unilateral measures, disregarding all that is going on in the political arena. Whereas the new changes revealed an addition to the area isolated behind the Western Wall, which has become 733 thousand donums, meaning that there is an addition of 32.1% (178 thousand donums) to what it was in 2006. The

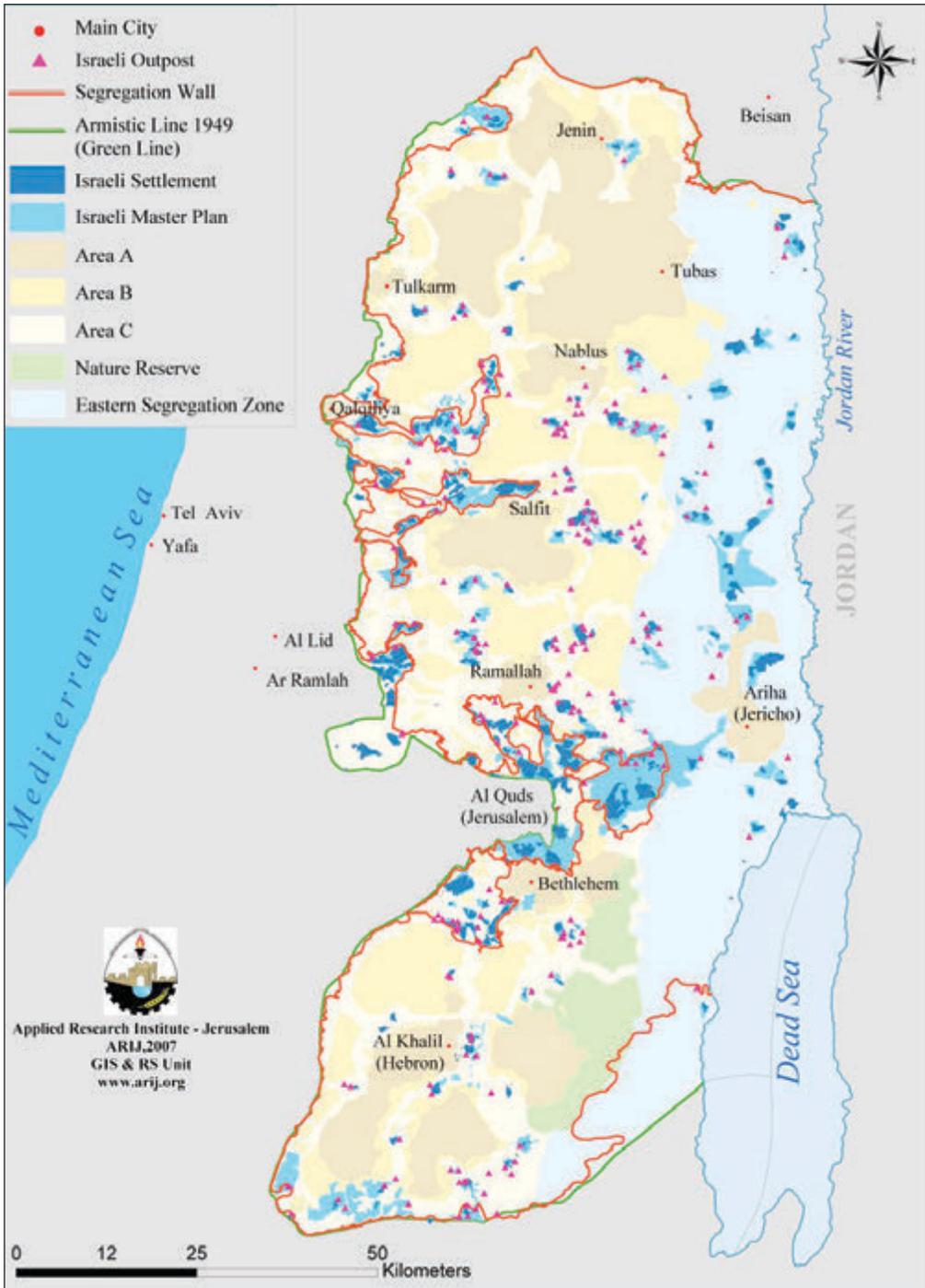
Wall's new path increased its length by 67 km (9.5%) more than it was in 2006, to make it 770 km.

The new changes in the Wall's path, as well as the area of lands isolated behind it, took place in two regions: the first is situated in the southeast of WB in an area south of the Jordan River Valley, alongside scenic areas in the south of WB. This is where an extension of the Wall was approved, from south of Hebron governorate to a northeastern direction, following which 53.5 km were added to the length of the Wall there. Consequently, 153.78 million donums were isolated between the new extension of the Wall and the Green Line. Furthermore, this new addition to the Wall's path has caused the isolation of a part of the Dead Sea region, where 71 km (37%) of a total of 194 km were isolated, which is the total area set aside for Palestinians there. It should be pointed out here that, in the past, the Israeli army had closed the road leading to the Dead Sea areas to Palestinians. As for the second change, it was made in the northwest of Ramallah, where a section of 13.5 km length was added, in order to join the Nili and Na'aleh settlements and isolate a further 4,140 donums area.¹²⁶

A report issued by OCHA-oPt revealed that 35 thousand Palestinians, who carry WB identity cards and live in 34 residential concentrations, would find themselves living in the space between the Wall and the 1948 borders. In this respect, it pointed out that 26 thousand Palestinians in eight concentrations in Bir Nabala, 'Azzun and al-Zawiya will be besieged from all sides by the Wall, which will cause entire families to be separated from their relatives, will delay school and university students from their classes in Jerusalem, and will keep Muslims and Christians from reaching their holy sites in the Sacred City.¹²⁷

The changes that the Israeli army is continuously making on the ground indicate its indifference to all that goes on in the political arena, rather its disregard of all the agreements signed between the state of Israel and the PLO. Moreover, the changes made by the Israeli army come in the context of the policy of taking bites out of the Palestinian land, one piece at a time, taking advantage of the fluctuations in the political conditions in the Palestinian arena and the changes in the international climate which is charged with tension. The aim is to draw the borders of Israel by applying the policy of *fait accompli*, and apart from any calls for bilateral, regional or international talks to discuss ways of solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Even if these talks are to take place, they will be based on facts on the ground.

Map 9/6: The Wall's Path According to the Israeli Plan, April 2007



It is worth mentioning here that work on the construction of the Wall was mostly suspended during 2009, for the Israeli army did not add any new sections to it; thus, it stands as it was in 2008. Nevertheless, the preparatory construction works continued, even if at a slower pace, since the army kept on preparing the infrastructure needed for erecting the cement wall or the separation fence in various regions, among them Bethlehem and southern Hebron. In general, these preparatory works did not cause direct damage to the inhabitants' properties, yet at times, some of these inhabitants were denied free access to their lands.

Tenth: Uprooting Fruit Trees

The extent of Israeli violations has widened to affect the agricultural sector, which is a key pillar of the Palestinian economy. For, in addition to the confiscation of thousands of Palestinian agricultural lands, the uprooting of fruit trees and the destruction of agricultural produce constituted the harshest Israeli violations against the Palestinian people in 2009. According to statistics prepared by ARIJ, during 2009, more than 14 thousand fruit trees were uprooted, razed or burned by the Israeli occupation army and settlers; and most of that took place in the northern governorates. This is in addition to similar acts of dredging, destruction and uprooting of fruit trees in GS.

Attacks by Israeli settlers (the settlements' residents) on Palestinian farmers during the olive-picking season increased, reaching in 2009 their ugliest forms, such as burning fruit trees with chemicals, uprooting them, stealing crops in areas adjacent to settlements, and engaging in scuffles with Palestinian farmers, within earshot and view of the Israeli army. This caused a decline in harvests, making them insufficient for covering the basic needs of the Palestinians in the WB, and augmentation in the losses of Palestinian farmers who subsist on their revenues from olive harvest.

The negative effects of confiscating agricultural lands and uprooting fruit trees are not confined to the agricultural sector and the farmers; they also cause grave environmental damage, such as increase in the rate of air pollution and soil erosion, as trees play a major role in protecting the environment and preserving the natural balance of the ecosystem around them.

Eleventh: Palestinian Water Rights

Since 1967, Israel has endeavored to consolidate and expand its control of Palestinian water resources, through its occupation of GS and WB. Thus, it imposed restrictions on the Palestinians' use of water and declared the lands adjacent to the Jordan River closed military areas. Furthermore, Israel consumes 82% of the quantities of the annually renewable water resources from the groundwater basins of the WB, in order to meet one quarter of its needs, while the water consumed by Palestinians constitutes 17% of this renewable quantity.

Water in the WB and GS is available from two main sources: surface water represented by the Jordan River, groundwater from the Coastal Aquifer Basin in GS, and the WB basins made up of three main ones: the western basin, the northeastern basin and the eastern basin.

Israel continues to exploit the Jordan River waters through projects, unilaterally executed, and in a manner that severely violates the water rights of Palestinians and of countries bordering the river. Most prominent of these projects is Israel's National Water Carrier, through which Israel divert water from the Tiberias Lake to the Negev Desert, in addition to King Abdullah Canal used to be known as the East Ghor Main Canal, causing the amount of water flowing into the river to be diminished from 1,250 million cubic meters (MCM) annually at the beginning of the fifties of the twentieth century to no more than 200 MCM a year of low quality and high salinity water.¹²⁸

It should be mentioned that the Jordan River basin covers about 50% of the water needs of each of Israel and Jordan, while it covers only 5% of the total water needs of Syria and Lebanon. Thus, every time one of the Arab countries overlooking the Jordan River tries to increase its consumption of its waters to satisfy the needs of its citizens, it finds Israel lying in wait for it.

As for groundwater, a total estimated recharge of 679 MCM of the three shared aquifers (the western, northeastern and eastern basins) is allocated between Palestinians and Israeli users, within Israel and in the WB,¹²⁹ knowing that the western basin is considered the biggest among them. It is worth mentioning that 80% of the areas that feed this basin are situated within the limits of the WB, while 80% of the storage areas are located within the limits of the land seized by Israel in 1948, the fact that lets this basin be shared by the WB and Israel.

Map 10/6: Proposed and Implemented Plans for Utilizing the Jordan River Waters



Most of the regions that feed the northeastern basin are situated in the WB, while the waters of the eastern basin are considered national Palestinian waters, as this basin is not connected to any of the aquifers in common with Israel, and the areas feeding this basin are found only in the WB.

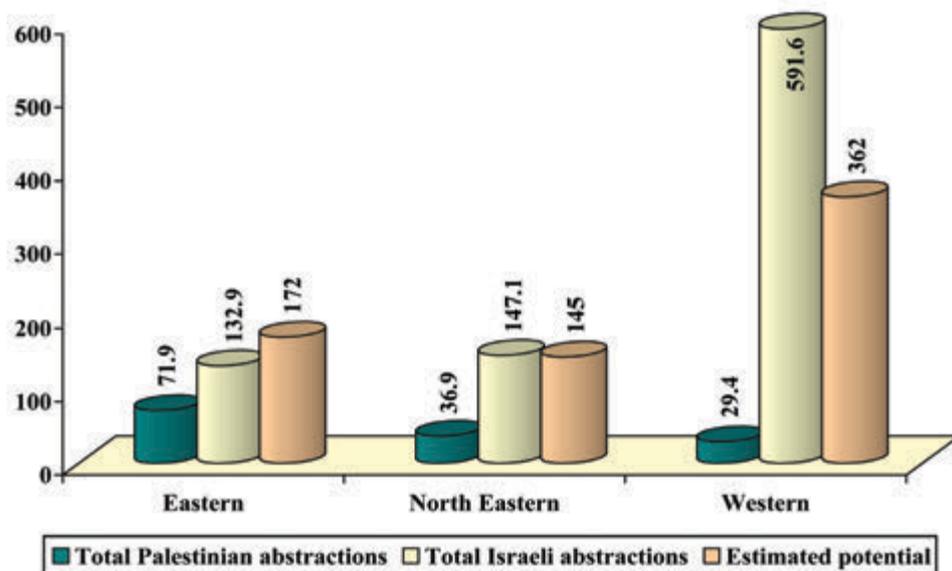
In spite of these facts, the Israelis consume the largest portion of these basins' waters. Table 5/6 shows the estimated potentials of the aquifers, and the difference between the quantities abstracted by the Israelis and by the Palestinians.

As for GS, the matter goes beyond that, as Israel's abstraction of the Coastal Aquifer led to a sharp drop in the level of the groundwater and deterioration in the water's quality. Studies indicate that the salinity levels in the aquifer have become higher than the rate recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO) of 250 mg/l.

Table 5/6: Abstractions from the Three Shared Aquifers Within WB and Israel 1999 (MCM)

Aquifer	Total Palestinian abstractions	Total Israeli abstractions	Estimated potential
Eastern	71.9	132.9	172
North eastern	36.9	147.1	145
Western	29.4	591.6	362

Abstractions from the Three Shared Aquifers Within WB and Israel 1999 (MCM)



Due to Israel's over-extraction of the underground basins and the restrictions it imposes on digging wells or rehabilitating them, Palestinian abstractions have actually declined over the last 10 years. Contrary to expectations under Oslo II article 40, the water actually abstracted by Palestinians in the WB has dropped from 138.5 MCM in 1999 to 113.5 MCM in 2007.¹³⁰ The figures of the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) show that the Palestinian extraction in 2008 reached 84 MCM, with the reduction was due to operational problems for some wells and a drop in the level of the water table, caused by Israeli over-extraction and low annual rainfall.¹³¹

**Table 6/6: Palestinian Abstractions from the Three Shared Aquifers
1999 and 2007 (MCM)¹³²**

Aquifer	Article 40 allocation	1999	2007
Western	22	29.4	27.9
North eastern	42	36.9	26.8
Eastern	74.5	71.9	58.8

Yet, under the Oslo II, an extra 28.6 MCM per year was to be allocated to Palestinian needs to be drawn from the eastern aquifer. However, Israel did not honor its commitment and supplied the Palestinians with only 15 MCM. It should be mentioned here that there are doubts whether there is the potential of drawing the agreed upon water quantities from the eastern basin, because of the drop in surface water level by an average of more than 25 meters a year, the fact which warns of danger regarding the amount of renewable water resources in this basin.

Due to Israel's water policy, the gap has widened between available water quantities and the increase in demand for water, due to the increase in population and urban development in all Palestinian regions. Thus, most Palestinian areas still suffer from great deficiency in water supplies; as no change worth mentioning has occurred in the quantities of water available for Palestinians since the Oslo Accords, see the following table:

Table 7/6: Averages of Water Supplies and the Deficient Quantities (MCM)¹³³

Year	Available quantity	Deficient quantities	Actual deficient quantities
2005	75	41.18	-
2006	79.3	42.18	-
2007	84.5	33.98	61.46
2008	88.58	34.64	62.38

During 2008, the Palestinian's average daily consumption of water did not exceed 73 liters. This is considered a low quantity, as it does not exceed 53% of the internationally recommended minimum, which is 150 liters per person per day. It should be noted that more than half of the rural Palestinian concentrations have an average consumption of no more than 50 liters per person per day. The great disparity in the availability of water resources, between the WB and GS on the one hand and Israel on the other, becomes clear when we know that the quantity of water consumed by an Israeli is estimated to be four times that of a Palestinian, as the daily share of the Israeli individual is 300 liters of water. During 2008, the quantity of water supplied to Palestinians in the WB governorates came to about 88.5 MCM; while based on the internationally recommended minimum, the needed quantity of water is about 121 MCM.

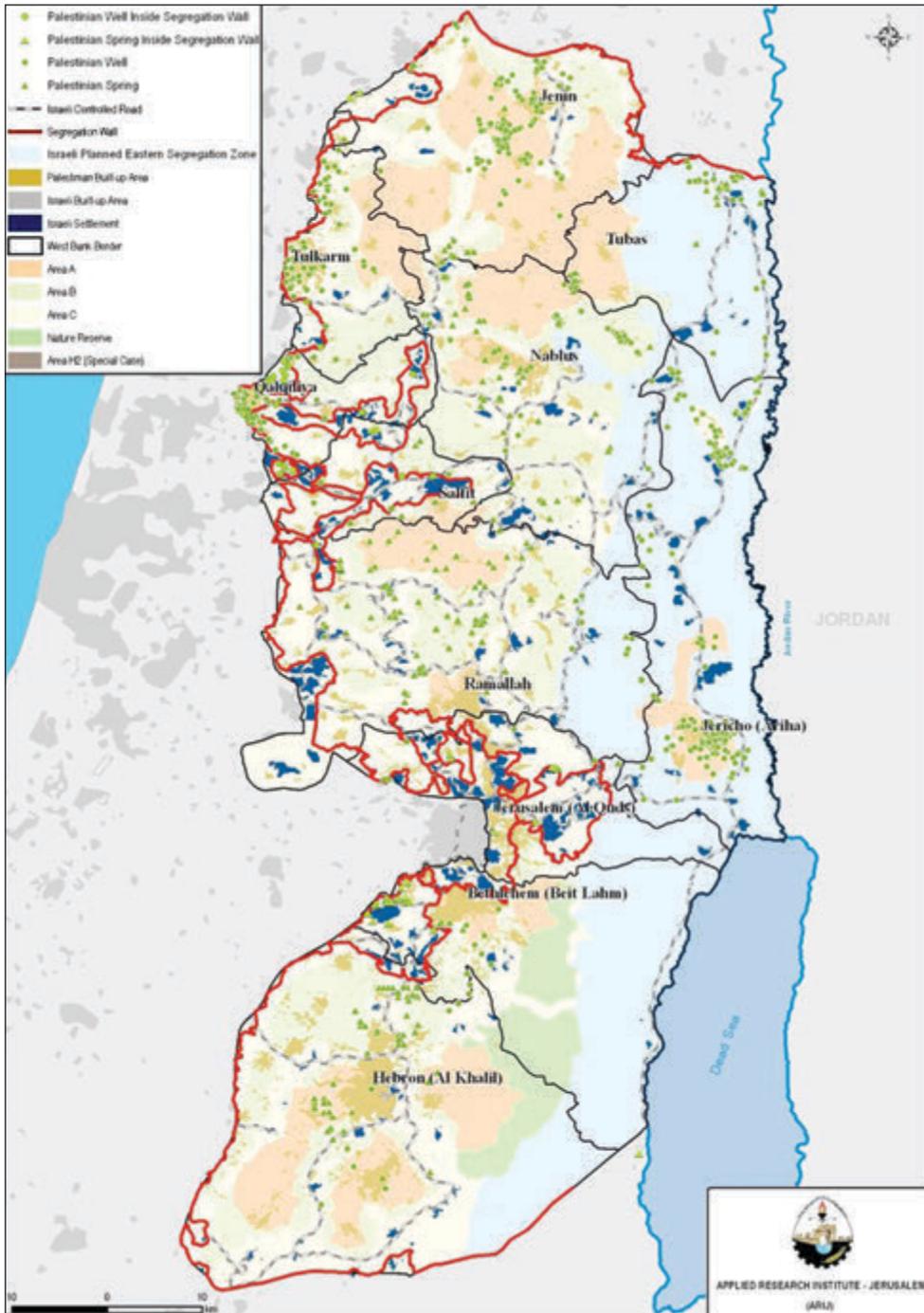
It is noticed that the WB governorates do not depend totally upon their own water resources in supplying the inhabitants with the needed quantities of potable water. This is due to the insufficiency in the water quantities produced from groundwater wells and springs, in addition to the lack of any other sources of supply. That is why, the PWA resorts to buying additional quantities of water from Mekorot, Israel's National Water Company, to make up for the shortages in the quantities of water supplied. It should be mentioned here that purchased water comes from three main sources: the wells of the WB Water Department, which are Palestinian wells that remain under the administration of the Israeli side; the Israeli wells that were dug in the WB after its occupation in 1967, and Mekorot from inside the Green Line. It is noticed that since the signing of the Oslo Accords, there has been an increase in the water bought from Mekorot, as it came in 2008 to more than 53% of the total supply of water.

On the other hand, more than 9% of the WB residents living in 134 Palestinian concentrations still lack public water networks. In addition, 15% of those residents served by the water network do not get water supply services, so they depend upon traditional methods of obtaining water, such as buying water from water tankers, collecting rainwater, or drawing water from nearby springs.

On the level of developing and administering water resources, the PA was not able to manage fully its resources. For according to Article 40 of the Oslo Accords, all development projects of the water and sanitary drainage sectors inside WB and GS are subject to the approval of the Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee (JWC). However, and since its formation, this committee has come under much criticism, as the final say regarding work projects concerning the water sector in the Palestinian occupied territories, in particular areas B and C that are under Israeli control, belongs decidedly to the Civil Administration Staff Officer for Water Affairs, who relies in his decisions on the authority of Israeli departments for the approval of any plan. Accordingly, the Palestinian side was barred from carrying out its commitments, as, since the Oslo II was signed, only about 57% of the Palestinian plans presented to the JWC were approved, while 143 plans were either not settled or frozen, and 22 others were rejected. The latter were to improve the services of the main infrastructure of the Palestinian population concentrations. The JWC did not approve those plans, for security or technical reasons, as it claims. As for the projects related to digging wells, 65 of 202 projects were approved; yet, only 38 projects were actually implemented. While the Israeli water projects for the illegal settlements in the Palestinian territories do not need the approval of the JWC, as Israel had kept for itself the responsibility for the water and drainage networks in the WB settlements during the transitional period.

On the other hand, security and military restrictions imposed by Israeli authorities on the WB territories represent a real obstacle to the Palestinians' ability to manage and use their water resources. For Israel started the building of the Separation Wall in order to swallow 13% of the WB area, including the Palestinian water wells and springs there; the fact that will prevent the Palestinians from using them, or will place severe restrictions on their usage. Thus, 31 artesian wells that produce 4.5 MCM per annum will be isolated. This is in addition to Israel's control of the eastern areas of the WB, which it declared closed military areas, knowing that these areas contain 105 artesian wells and 30 springs (see map 11/6).

Map 11/6: Palestinian Wells and Springs Isolated Behind the Separation Wall and the Eastern Isolation Region



Consequently, lack of coordination, the practices of the JWC, the laws laid down by the Israeli Civil Administration regarding planning and investment, in addition to security and military restrictions imposed by Israel, led to deterioration in the water situation, inability to develop water resources and provide services to the Land's children, the Palestinians.

Twelfth: Israeli Military Roadblocks

On 16/9/2009, the Israeli occupation army announced that it has begun removing 100 military roadblocks in the WB, in accordance with the directives issued by the Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak,¹³⁴ and in the wake of a security assessment conducted by the commander of the Israeli Central Command, and the Chief of Staff of the Israeli army, Gabi Ashkenazi. The Israeli occupation army military spokesperson claimed that the “decision is a continuation of the government policy to improve the economic situation in the region while maintaining the operational flexibility of the Israel Defense Forces and security forces.”

The truth of the matter is that what Israel is doing is a mere media political ploy, seeing that the checkpoints that Israel had claimed having removed remain in place. However, their administrative category has changed, as they have become known as Flying (random) Checkpoints. Thus, by the end of 2009, the number of Israeli roadblocks of all kinds was 617, of which there are 78 fixed checkpoints, 17 flying checkpoints, 71 observation towers, 113 agricultural gates, 155 concrete roadblocks and iron gates, and 183 earthmounds.¹³⁵

All these roadblocks contribute directly to limiting the Palestinian citizens' freedom of movement between cities, or toward their agricultural lands, in particular those situated at the Wall. The Wadi al-Nar checkpoint, known as the Container Checkpoint, where prevention of transit cuts the north and the south of the *WB* off from each other, constitutes the greatest obstacle to the Palestinians' freedom of movement.

A report prepared by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) indicated that 65% of the main roads that lead to 18 Palestinian communities in the WB are closed or are controlled by the Israeli army. It must be noted here that there are around 500 kilometers of restricted roads across the WB.¹³⁶



Thirteenth: The GS and the Israeli Occupation

In past years, the GS governorates were subjected to repeated Israeli invasions and attacks, in particular after the outbreak of the second *Intifadah* on 28/9/2000. Then matters got worse, with siege, war and destruction, after Hamas won the elections in early 2006 and took control of the GS in the middle of 2007.

1. Destruction of Agricultural Lands

In an analysis of what followed the war on GS waged by Israel, from 27/12/2008 and until 18/1/2009, reports indicate that the Israeli massive air raids, the destruction and devastation inflicted by Israeli vehicles and bulldozers, and the overall military operation against the Sector, caused the destruction of about 57 km² of the GS agricultural lands totaling 196 km², a ratio of 29%.¹³⁷

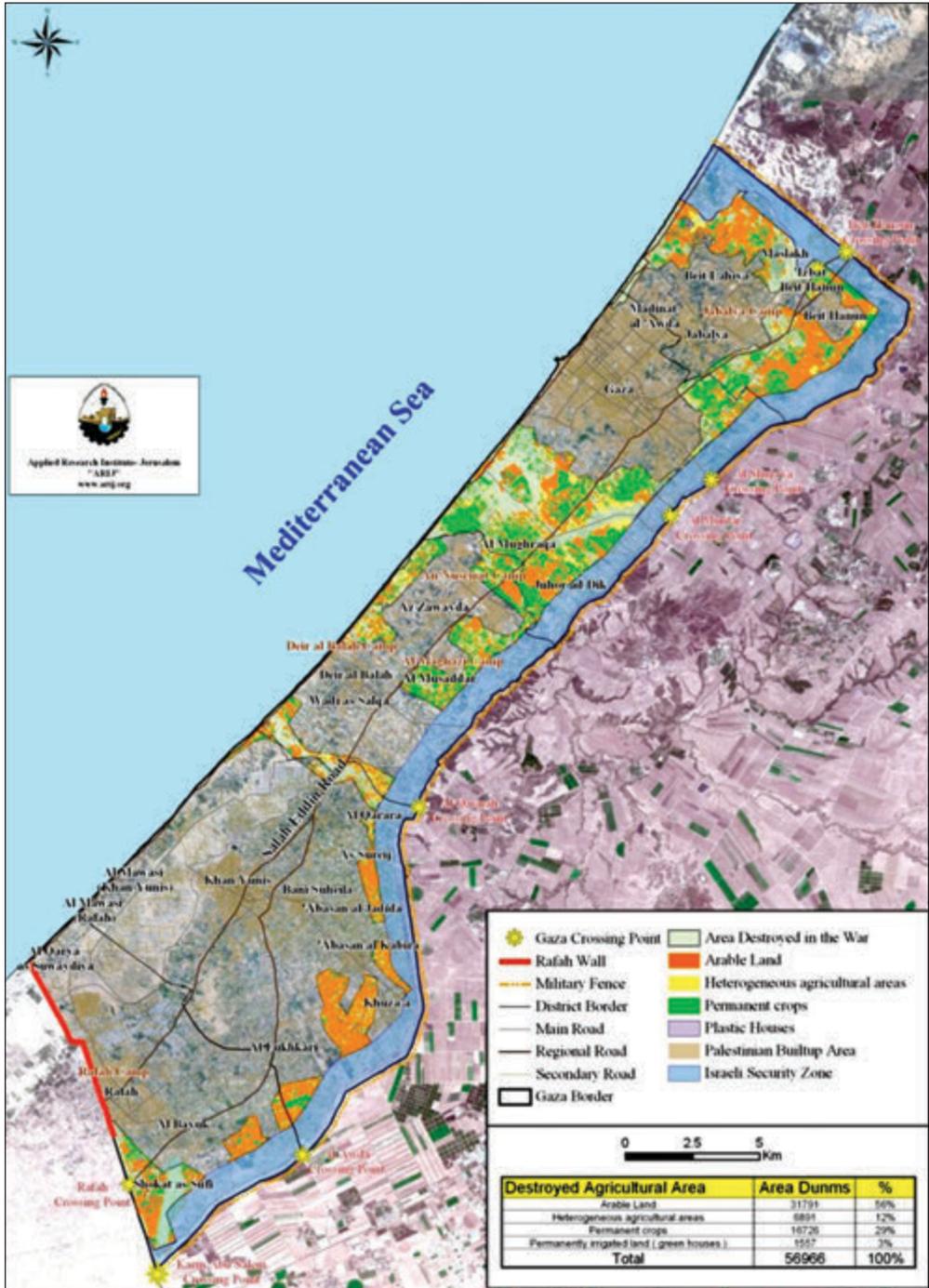
2. Destruction of Infrastructure

During Israel's offensive against GS, in the period between 27/12/2008 and 18/1/2009, Israeli aircrafts and bulldozers destroyed 5,356 Palestinian houses, comprising 7,878 residential units, and made thousands homeless; and that according to a report by the PCHR in 2009.¹³⁸ The number of Palestinian buildings that sustained heavy damages owing to the latest Israeli aggression amounted to more than 16 thousand buildings, most of them located in the northern and central governorates; this is in addition to the destruction of numerous schools and industrial, commercial and public establishments.

3. Israel's Control of More than 24% of the GS Area

On 28/6/2007, the Israeli occupation forces announced the redrawing of the buffer zone along the northern and eastern borders of GS, along a length of 58 km,¹³⁹ as the security zone was enlarged for the second time, and unilaterally on the part of Israel, for a distance of 1.5 km on the Palestinian side, along all the borderline of GS, starting from the far northwest and ending with Karm Abu Salim crossing in the southeast.

Map 12/6: Agricultural Areas Destroyed by Israel During Its Last Invasion of GS



This change comes in violation of the Oslo Accords of 1994 between Israel and the PLO, following which it was determined that the width of the buffer zone is to be 500 meters and its length 58 km, starting with the GS northwest borders and ending with the region of eastern Rafah in the south. However, after the outbreak of the second *al-Aqsa Intifadah* in 2000, Israel enlarged the buffer zone, adding variable widths that were determined in September 2005, following the withdrawal (redeployment) of Israeli troops from GS, letting the buffer zone widths vary between 600 and 1,000 meters.

Following this withdrawal (redeployment) in 2005, Israel designed a plan to establish a security buffer zone, having a width of five kilometers, along the entire borderline surrounding the GS. This measure required the evacuation of Palestinian residential areas north of GS, among them, Beit Lahia and Beit Hanoun. However, the plan was not executed, until the Israeli occupation forces returned to it at the end of June 2007, after a new decree was issued for this same plan.

In an analytical study carried out by ARIJ, it was shown that the area of buffer/ security zone that Israel plans to establish along the borderline in GS will appropriate 87 km² of land, of which Israel had taken tight control of 29 km² immediately after the Oslo Accords were signed between the Palestinian and Israeli sides in 1994. These were widened later to 61 km², following the Israeli withdrawal (redeployment) in 2005. If the Israeli plan came to be realized, Israel will be in control of 24% of the GS area of 362 km². The remaining 275 km² would belong to the Palestinians who number around 1.5 million people, making their population density 5,447 persons per km², which is the highest in the world.

Map 13/6: Buffer Zone Under Israeli Control in GS



Conclusion

During 2009, the Israeli authorities continued with an accelerated pace to apply their policy of Judaizing Jerusalem and taking control of *al-Aqsa* Mosque. Lately there were many fears that the occupation is preparing to partition *al-Aqsa* Mosque between Muslims and Jews. A big rise in the number of storming incidents carried out by Jewish religious extremists, officials and Israeli security agencies of the mosque was recorded. Furthermore, the year 2009 witnessed an accelerated pace of excavations below the Mosque and in its periphery, as the number of excavation sites has reached 25.

The sufferings of the Jerusalemites continue to multiply, through denying them building permits and demolishing their homes. Thus, there are about eight thousand homes threatened with demolition, among them hundreds of homes in al-Bustan neighborhood; all of that fall within the plan to make way for building the historic “City of David.”

Furthering the pace of settlement building, particularly in Jerusalem since Netanyahu came to power and approved the building of more than 19,100 residential units, 81% of them in Jerusalem’s settlements, points to the gravity of the Judaization plan being implemented. Moreover, the existence of 199 Israeli settlements in WB, including 34 in East Jerusalem, in addition to 232 Israeli settlement outposts, indicates the extent of the difficulty facing any peace settlement leading to the establishment of a genuine contiguous Palestinian state, having actual sovereignty over its territories.

Thus, the Judaization plan and the changes in the features of the land and in the population, particularly in Jerusalem, continue at a rapid pace, in a race with time, in order to impose the final form of any political settlement. While simultaneously, the PA’s performance remains confused in the face of these challenges. Moreover, Arabic and Islamic weakness, added to international indifference, encourage the Israeli side to go ahead and commit more acts of aggression against the land and the holy sites.

Endnotes

- ¹ *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 30/7/2009.
- ² Muhammad 'Awwad, *Iqamat al-Haykal al-Maz'um: I'lan al-Harb al-Diniyyah* (Building the so-Called Temple: Declaring a Religious War) (Amman: The Royal Committee for Jerusalem Affairs, 2004), p. 57.
- It seems that Netanyahu has learned some of Sharon's realism in this respect. Thus, the policy communiqués of his current cabinet are devoid of any commitment regarding "The Temple Mount." He actually denies the existence of such excavations, as he did on 12/10/2009, although he stressed in his speech on 21/5/2009, on "Jerusalem Day" which is the anniversary of Jerusalem's unification, that the "mountain of the Temple of the Almighty will be firmly established as the head of the mountains, and it will be exalted above the hills, and all the nations will stream to it." At Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 21/5/2009, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2009/Address_PM_Netanyahu_Jerusalem_Day_21-May-2009.htm
- ³ Site of Al Quds City, Al Quds International Institution, 23/6/2009, <http://www.alquds-online.org/index.php?s=7&ss=news&id=2401>
- ⁴ Wafa, 26/7/2009, <http://arabic.wafa.ps/arabic//index.php?action=detail&id=46990>
- ⁵ 'Abdullah Ibhais et al., *'Ayn 'ala al-Aqsa: Taqrir Tawthiqi Istiqra'i Yarsud al-I'tida'at 'ala al-Masjid al-Aqsa fi al-Fatrah bayna 21/8/2008–21/8/2009* (An Eye on al-Aqsa: A Deductive Documentary Report that Monitors the Attacks on al-Aqsa Mosque during the Period 21/8/2008–21/8/2009) (Beirut: Al Quds International Institution, 2009), p. 51.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- ⁷ The Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), in its Hebrew and English language websites, announces most of the details of these excavations, which are now available on-line in a refereed e-journal, under the title *Hadashot Arkheologiyot – Excavations and Surveys in Israel*. It usually does not keep these excavations a secret on purpose; however, the Arab media does not usually reach such sources, subsequently titles such as "uncovering" "new" excavations are abundant in it, every time new developments take place in these excavations. Moreover, the IAA opens the door for archeologists, professionals and amateurs, from inside and outside the state, and gives them the opportunity to observe the work done on these excavations, in exchange for a certain amount of money. Furthermore, it relies on this income as one of its sources for financing these excavations. For more information, one can refer to this periodical's site on the Internet, www.hadashot-esi.org.il
- ⁸ *The Jerusalem post*, 28/3/2008.
- ⁹ This same article indicates that this date agrees with an old "prophecy" by a Jewish rabbi in the 18th century, in which he foresaw the date of rebuilding "The Third Temple," depending on the completion of the third construction of this synagogue, in: *Haaretz*, 30/11/2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1131599.html>
- ¹⁰ 'Abdullah Ibhais et al., *op. cit.*, p. 28.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- ¹² Al Quds City, 11/6/2009, <http://www.alquds-online.org/index.php?s=news&cat=&id=2328>
- ¹³ Site of PLS48.NET, 19/8/2009, <http://www.pls48.net/default.asp?ID=49910>
- ¹⁴ Al Quds City, 11/10/2009, <http://www.alquds-online.org/index.php?s=7&ss=news&id=3366>
- ¹⁵ Al Quds City, 25/10/2009, <http://www.alquds-online.org/index.php?s=news&cat=&id=3470>
- ¹⁶ Al Quds City, 5/10/2009, <http://www.alquds-online.org/index.php?s=7&ss=news&id=3308>



- ¹⁷ An interview with the Jordanian King ‘Abdullah II, *Haaretz*, 8/10/2009, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1119633.html>
- ¹⁸ Adrian Blomfield, Fears of Third Intifada as Tension Grows in Israel, *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper, United Kingdom (UK), 8/10/2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/6274959/Fears-of-third-intifada-as-tension-grows-in-Israel.html>
- ¹⁹ These expulsion orders affected Sheikh Kamal al-Khatib, the deputy leader of the Islamic Movement in 1948 occupied Palestine, Sheikh ‘Ali Abu Sheikha, consultant to the Islamic Movement on Jerusalem Affairs and *al-Aqsa* Mosque, Sheikh ‘Ikrima Sabri, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Islamic Law and the preacher of *al-Aqsa* Mosque, Sheikh Mustafa Abu Zahra, a member of the Chamber of Commerce in Jerusalem, and the leader Hatim Abd al-Qadir, Fatah’s Jerusalem Affairs Liaison, in addition to the decisions made before this period of expelling Sheikh Ra’id Salah from Jerusalem’s Old City, and then from all of Jerusalem.
- ²⁰ http://www.foraqsa.com/content/news/archive.php?subaction=showfull&id=1248545915&archive=1249204342&start_from=&ucat=1&
- ²¹ Media and Information Department in Al Quds International Institution, “Al-Quds... the Harvest of Forty Years,” Al Quds International Institution, 2008, pp. 16-18, <http://www.alquds-online.org/org/userfiles/pdf/Ma3ared/Hasad%2040%20-%20English.pdf>
- ²² See Donald Macintyre, The Man Who Sold Jerusalem, *The Independent* newspaper, London, 10/5/2005, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/the-man-who-sold-jerusalem-490146.html>
- ²³ Al Quds City, 9/8/2009, <http://www.alquds-online.org/index.php?s=news&id=2874>
- ²⁴ *Alquds*, 7/1/2010.
- ²⁵ Site of SQLB-Church.com, 14/1/2010, <http://sqlb-church.com/archives/974>
- ²⁶ *Asharq Alawsat*, 6/1/2009.
- ²⁷ *Felesteen*, 4/12/2009.
- ²⁸ Al Quds City, 4/12/2009, <http://www.alquds-online.org/index.php?s=news&id=3770>
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- ³⁰ Rivalry between Arab, Greek Clergymen Resurfaces, *The Jordan Times* newspaper, Amman, 17/11/2009, <http://www.jordantimes.com/?news=21655&searchFor=Theophilus>
- ³¹ Orthodox Congregation Continues Protests Over Church Leadership, *The Jordan Times*, 27/11/2009, <http://www.jordantimes.com/?news=21946&searchFor=Theophilus>
- ³² *Felesteen*, 17/8/2009.
- ³³ Ma’an, 11/12/2009.
- ³⁴ International Solidarity Movement, Israeli Violations Against Islamic and Christian Holy Sites in Palestine During 2009 (Arabic), published in the site of Palestine Network for Media and Information under the title The Holy City: the Most Targeted in the WB, and Serious Violations Against Gaza’s Holy Sites (Arabic), 3/1/2010, <http://palst.ps/news.php?action=view&id=1216>
- ³⁵ The General Framework for the Mechanism of Rebuilding Gaza (Arabic), site of Ministry of Public Works and Housing, Palestinian National Authority, February 2009, <http://www.mpwh.ps/wp-content/uploads/reconstruction.pdf>
- ³⁶ International Solidarity Movement, Israeli Violations Against Islamic and Christian Holy Sites in Palestine During 2009 (Arabic).

- ³⁷ “Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies” constitutes the only source for the city’s detailed field statistics. It studies the statistical indicators issued by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, and adds to them the results of its own surveys. However, it is slow in releasing information, as it issued in 2009 its annual Statistical Yearbook for 2008, which in turn discusses the statistical indicators of 2007, the fact that compels us to cite in this study the figures of 2007.
- ³⁸ “Chapter 7: Population and Society,” in *Local Outline Plan Jerusalem 2000*, Prepared for Jerusalem Municipality, by Planning Administration, City Engineer, City Planning Department, cited from: The Palestinian Counseling Center (PCC), http://www.pcc-jer.org/arabic/Publication/jerusalem_master_plan/jerusalemplan_eng.html
- ³⁹ The Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies (JIIS), *Statistical Year Book of Jerusalem 2008* (Jerusalem: JIIS, 2009), table III/1, http://jiis.org/.upload/yearbook/2007_8/shnaton%20C0106.pdf
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, table III/4, http://jiis.org/.upload/yearbook/2007_8/shnaton%20C0406.pdf
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, table III/3, http://jiis.org/.upload/yearbook/2007_8/shnaton%20C0306.pdf
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, table III/6, http://jiis.org/.upload/yearbook/2007_8/shnaton%20C0606.pdf
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, table III/11, http://jiis.org/.upload/yearbook/2007_8/shnaton%20C1107.pdf
Remark: The median age of the city’s Jewish residents tends to increase, as it went up by 0.7 points during the period 1997–2007, while that of the Palestinians tend to decrease, as it went down by 0.8 points during the same period.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, table III/17, http://jiis.org/.upload/yearbook/2007_8/shnaton%20C1706.pdf
- ⁴⁷ The Jerusalemites do not carry “ID Cards” in the sense of proving their citizenship, they rather carry permanent residency cards that allow them to live and work in Jerusalem and in the occupied territories of 1948. These residency cards are renewed every 10 years, approved by the Israeli Interior Minister. Calling them identity cards does not serve to clarify this unique and unjust legal status.
- ⁴⁸ *Haaretz*, 2/12/2009.
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- ⁵⁰ Musallam Abu Helu, “Development Challenges in the Jerusalem Area in the Absence of National Housing Policies and Strategies,” (Arabic) a research paper presented in the Regional Conference on Creativity and Initiatives of Development in Arab Cities, Amman, 14–17/1/2008, p. 3.
- ⁵¹ Ya‘qub ‘Awdah, *al-Haqq fi al-Sakan* (The Right to Housing) (Jerusalem: The Civic Coalition for Defending Palestinians’ Rights in Jerusalem, September 2008), p. 8.
- ⁵² Israel: Stop East Jerusalem Home Demolitions, site of HRW, 6/11/2009, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/11/06/israel-stop-east-jerusalem-home-demolitions>
- ⁵³ Musallam Abu Helu, op. cit., p. 8.
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- ⁵⁶ As for the years 2000-2008, see Demolishing Palestinian Houses, site of The Applied Research Institute—Jerusalem (ARIJ), 19/12/2009, http://www.poica.org/editor/case_studies/view.php?recordID=2254
As for the year 2009, see Home Demolitions in Jerusalem During 2009 (Arabic), MSD.
- ⁵⁷ JIIS, *Statistical Year Book of Jerusalem 2008*, table V/1, http://jiis.org/.upload/yearbook/2007_8/shnaton%20E0107.pdf

- ⁵⁸ “Chapter 7: Population and Society.”
- ⁵⁹ For further information see *Yedioth Ahronoth*, 25/8/2008, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3586852,00.html>
- ⁶⁰ *Alquds*, 23/10/2008, <http://www.alquds.com/docs/pdf-docs/2008/10/23/page34.pdf>
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Chapter Seven

The Palestinian Demographic Indicators

The Palestinian Demographic Indicators

Introduction

Another year has ended, and one of the greatest tragedies that have befallen a people in modern human history remains unresolved, as the international community and its institutions remain unable to treat one of the most just causes in the world: the cause of a people whose first half lives under occupation while its second half is part of a Diaspora living in exile.

This chapter deals with the main Palestinian demographic indicators for 2009, including the number of Palestinians inside Palestine and in the Diaspora, their demographic characteristics, age groups, demographic growth trends, and Israel pressures to displace them.

First: The Palestinian Population Worldwide

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) revised estimates show that the number of Palestinians in the world, at the end of 2009, was around 10.87 million Palestinians; more than half of them (around 51.8%) live in the Diaspora, while the rest lives in historical Palestine which includes the territories occupied in 1948 and 1967.

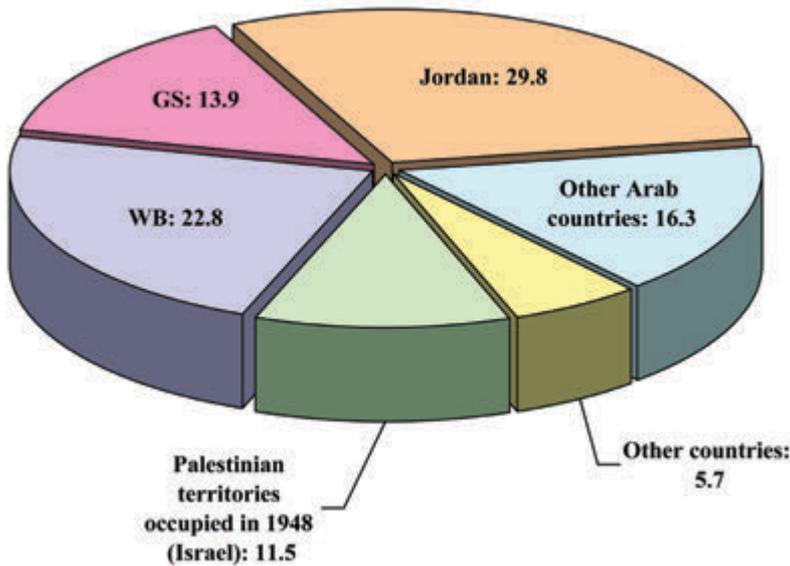
The Palestinian residents living in historical Palestine are distributed by approximately 1.25 million living in Palestinian territories occupied in 1948, i.e., Israel, and approximately 3.99 million living in Palestinian territories occupied in 1967. The latter are distributed by 1.51 million people in GS, i.e., 37.9% and 2.48 million people in the WB, i.e., 62.1% (including Jerusalem).

Table 1/7 presents the estimates of the worldwide Palestinian population according to their place of residence, at the end of 2009.

Table 1/7: Palestinian Population Worldwide Estimate According to Their Place of Residence at the End of 2009¹

Place of residence		Population estimate (thousands)	Percentage (%)
Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 (Israel)		1,247	11.5
Palestinian territories occupied in 1967	WB	2,481	22.8
	GS	1,511	13.9
Jordan		3,240	29.8
Other Arab countries		1,776	16.3
Other countries		618	5.7
Total		10,873	100

Percentage of Palestinian Population Worldwide According to their Place of Residence at the End of 2009 (%)



Palestinians in the Diaspora are concentrated in the neighboring Arab countries, especially in Jordan where the Palestinian population was estimated at approximately 3.24 million at the end of 2009, i.e., approximately 29.8% of the total worldwide Palestinian population. As for the remaining Palestinians living in other Arab countries, they are estimated at 1.78 million, i.e., 16.3% of the total Palestinian population, who are mainly concentrated in the neighboring Arab countries; Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and the Gulf Countries. As for the remaining

Palestinians living in foreign countries, their number was estimated to be around 618 thousands, i.e., 5.7% of the total Palestinian population, most of whom are concentrated in the USA, Latin America, Canada, UK, and other EU countries.

Second: The Demographic Characteristics of Palestinians

1. The WB and GS

The population in the WB and GS was estimated at around 3.99 million, at the end of 2009, of which around 2.48 million people in the WB, i.e., 62.1%, and 1.51 million people in GS, i.e., 37.9%. As for the distribution of the Palestinian population in the governorates, data indicate that Hebron is the governorate with the largest population, which reached 591 thousand people, i.e., 14.8% of the total population in the WB and GS. The next largest governorate is Gaza where the population reached 527 thousand people, i.e., 13.2% of the total population in the WB and GS, whereas the population in Jerusalem governorate reached 379 thousand people, i.e., 9.5% of the total population in the WB and GS. Data indicate also that Jericho and al-Aghwar governorates registered the smallest population, at the end of 2009, where the number was approximately 45 thousand people, i.e., 1.1%.

Estimates from 2009 statistics indicate that 45% of the WB and GS population are refugees from the Palestinian territories occupied in 1948, with an estimate of 1.795 million refugees at the end of 2009. They reached approximately 749 thousand in the WB, i.e., 30.2% of the total WB population, and 1.046 million refugees in GS, i.e., 69.2% of the total GS population.²

Table 2/7: Comparing the Palestinian Total and Refugee Population in the WB and GS 2009

Place of residence	Total population		Refugee population	
	Estimate (thousands)	Percentage (%)	Estimate (thousands)	Percentage (%)
WB	2,481	62.1	749	30.2
GS	1,511	37.9	1,046	69.2
WB and GS	3,992	100	1,795	45

The Palestinian population in the WB and GS is young, where the percentage of individuals under 15 years of age, at the end of 2009, was estimated at 41.5% with a significant difference between the WB and GS, as the percentage in the WB was 39.7% compared to 44.6% in GS. The percentage of individuals above 65 years of age was estimated at 3%, with a difference between the WB and GS; it reached 3.4% in the WB and 2.4% in GS.³

Therefore, the age distribution within the population reveals a wide-based population pyramid with a pointed narrow tip, meaning that, in the upcoming years, the Palestinians will remain influenced by the relatively high natural population growth despite the decrease in the natural population growth rate and the fertility rate in the past years.

The estimated number of males at the end of 2009 was around 2.026 million in the WB and GS, compared to 1.965 million females for an estimated sex ratio of 103.1 males per 100 females. As for the WB, the number of males was 1.259 million compared to 1.221 million females, while the number of males in GS was 767 thousand compared to 744 thousand females; meaning that both the WB and GS kept the same sex ratio of 103.1 males per 100 females.

Data indicate that the dependency ratio in the WB and GS has dropped from 101.3 in 1997 to 80.5 in 2009. On the regional level, a major difference is noticeable in the dependency ratio for both the WB and GS. In the WB it has dropped from 94.7 in 1997 to 75.6 in 2009, while in GS it dropped from 114.5 in 1997 to 89.1 in 2009.⁴

The WB and GS have witnessed a clear improvement in life expectancy rates during the last 15 years. They increased by approximately 5–6 years, from around 67 years for both males and females in 1992, to 70.5 years for males and 73.2 years for females in the mid 2009. This rate is expected to further increase in the coming years to reach almost 72 years for males and 75 for females in 2015. The increase in the life expectancy rate at birth has led to an increase in the elderly population in the WB and GS, which required the need to conduct research and study on the elderly situation in the WB and GS.

The elderly constitute a low percentage of the population. In mid 2009, the elderly (above 60 years of age) population has reached a percentage of 4.4% of the total population in the WB and GS, with 4.9% in the WB and 3.7% in GS. It is worth mentioning that in developed countries as a whole the proportion of elderly

in the general population was around 16%, whereas in developing countries as a whole the proportion of elderly in the general population was around 6%.

The percentage of males aged 60 years or above in the WB and GS in 2009 was around 3.8% compared to 5.1% of females, with a sex ratio estimated at 78.3 males per 100 females. The higher proportion of females as compared to males in the elderly population is basically due to biological and health reasons which increase the life expectancy for females compared to males in most countries of the world.

Statistics of the Population, Housing and Establishment Census 2007 (PHC-2007) also indicate that 90.6% of the elderly males in the WB are married as opposed to 42.6% of married females, while the percentage of elderly widows has reached 7.6% for males and 47.6% for females. The high percentage of married elderly males compared to females may be explained by the fact that males are more likely to remarry after the death of their wives, besides the higher life expectancy of females compared to that of males.⁵

Data also indicate a mild increase in the median age (the age which divides the population into two numerically, equal groups; i.e., half the people are younger than this age and half are older) in the WB and GS, during the years 1997–2009. The median age increased from 16.4 years in 1997 to 18.3 years in 2009. When comparing data between the WB and GS (each area separately), for the period of 1997–2009, a difference in the median age can be noticed. It increased in the WB from 17.4 years in 1997 to 19.1 years in 2009, whereas it increased in GS from 14.8 years in 1997 to 17 years in 2009.

The crude birth rate (CBR) in the WB and GS decreased from 42.7 births per one thousand inhabitants in 1997 to 32.7 births in 2009; this is due to the drop of fertility rate in the WB and GS. On the regional level, there is a difference in the CBR between the WB and GS, where the CBR rate in the WB has dropped from 41.2 births in 1997 to 30.1 in 2009, whereas in GS, the CBR dropped from 45.4 births in 1997 to 36.9 in 2009.⁶ And the population projections indicate that the CBR in the WB and GS will drop from 32.7 births per one thousand inhabitants in 2009 to 31.9 births in 2015.

The available data indicate that the crude death rate (CDR) is relatively low and is expected to drop slightly in the WB and GS, where the CDR has dropped from 4.9 deaths per one thousand inhabitants in 1997 to 4.3 deaths per one thousand inhabitants in 2009, and it is expected to reach 3.6 deaths per one thousand inhabitants in 2015.

When considering each area separately, we notice that there is a slight difference in the CDR between the WB and GS. In the WB, the CDR has dropped from 5.1 deaths in 1997 to 4.4 deaths per one thousand inhabitants in 2009 and it is expected to reach 3.8 deaths per one thousand inhabitants in 2015. Whereas in GS, the CDR has dropped from 4.7 deaths in 1997 to 4.1 deaths in 2009, and it is expected to reach around 3.5 deaths per one thousand inhabitants in 2015.⁷

Despite the decrease in the total fertility rate, the natural population growth rate in the WB and GS is still high since it has reached 3% in 2007, and 2.9% in mid 2009, with 2.6% in the WB and 3.3% in GS. The growth rates are expected to remain unchanged for the next few years, as the low level of death rates and high level of fertility rates will result in an increase in the natural population growth rates, which will require appropriate economic and social policies to deal with such an increase.⁸

Data indicate that the total fertility rate in the WB and GS was 4.6 births in 2007, compared with 4.9 births in 1999 as opposed to 6 births in 1997. Fertility in the WB and GS is considered to be high compared to the levels currently prevailing in other countries. High fertility rates are mainly due to early marriage especially among females, and the desire to procreate as well as customs and traditions prevailing in the Palestinian society, but there are indications which confirm that fertility has started to decline during the last decade of the last century.

When considering each area separately, one can notice that the total fertility rate in GS was higher than in the WB during the period 1997–2007, reaching 4.1 births in the WB in 2007 compared to 5.6 births in 1997, whereas in GS, it was 5.3 births in 2007 compared to 6.9 births in 1997. Also, the average number of children born to married women in the WB and GS in 2006 was about 4.7 children; where in the WB it was 4.6 children and in the GS it was 5 children.

A high total fertility rate can be noticed in the WB and GS as compared to the Arab countries, where it was estimated in 2009 at 3.5 births in Jordan, 3.1 births in Egypt and 1.7 births in Tunisia. Therefore, the WB and GS are considered to be among areas having a high fertility rate.⁹

As a result of low death rates in the WB and GS, the life expectancy of individuals has increased as it reached 71.8 years in 2009 with 70.5 years for males and 73.2 years for females. As for the WB, life expectancy in 2009 was 72.3 years with 70.9 for males and 73.7 years for females, whereas in GS, it reached 71.2 years with 69.9 years for

males and 72.5 for females. Another reason for the increase in the life expectancy of individuals is health level improvement and gradual decrease in mortality rates of infants and children.¹⁰

Results of the PHC-2007 indicate that 8.8% of households is headed by females in the WB and GS; 9.7% and 7.1% in the WB and GS respectively. The size of female headed households is relatively small, with an average size of 3.5 persons in the WB and GS as compared to 6.5 persons for male headed households. Female-headed families in the WB and GS often rise as a consequence of husband's death or immigration.¹¹

In terms of household size, data point out that there was a decline in the average household size in the WB and GS, where the average household size declined from 6.4 persons according to 1997 population census to 5.8 persons according to 2007 population census. The average declined in the WB from 6.1 persons in 1997 to 5.5 in 2007, while it declined in GS from 6.9 persons to 6.5 for the same period. In mid 2009, the estimated number of households in the WB and GS has reached 675,524 families, of which 445,684 households in the WB and 229,840 in GS.¹²

Despite the fact that the pattern of extended families is declining and nuclear families prevailing, the family in the WB and GS remains conservative of family bonds, and respect and care for the elderly, despite major transformations on the lifestyle of Palestinian families over the past years; the results of PHC-2007 has indicated that the percentage of extended families has dropped to 15.3% in 2007, with 12.2% in the WB and 24.5% in GS. The elderly head 15.4% of households. The households headed by elderly people are relatively small, they were comprised of 3.9 persons compared to 5.8 for households headed by other than elderly.¹³

The final results of the census also showed that the percentage of nuclear family in the WB in 2007 reached 83.2% compared to 74% in 1997. On the other hand, the number of nuclear Palestinian families in GS is estimated at 160,111 families accounting for 73% of the total Palestinian families in GS, while in 1997 this percentage was at 71.8% in GS. This confirms the trend towards an increase in nuclear families at the expense of extended families.

With regard to the prevalence of illiteracy, results show that illiteracy rates among adults in the WB and GS are among the lowest rates in the world, where the illiteracy rate among individuals aged 15 years or above, was 5.9% with 2.9% males and 9.1% females in 2008, noting that an illiterate person is defined as a person who cannot read or write a simple sentence about his daily life.

Results also indicate a significant drop in the illiteracy rates since 1997, among individuals 15 years and above the rate was 5.9% in 2008 while it was 13.9% in 1997; this means that there are 6 illiterate individuals per 100 individuals aged 15 years and above and this declining trend applies to both genders where it dropped from 7.8% in 1997 to 2.9% in 2008 among males, and from 20.3% to 9.1% among females for the same period. The drop was highest among males reaching 62.8% compared to 55.2% among females.

As for type of locality, the illiteracy rate in urban localities decreased from 12.4% in 1997 to 5.2% in 2008, while it dropped from 16.9% to 7.5% in the rural localities and from 13.5% to 5.9% in the refugee camps, for the same period. Data indicate that illiteracy rate among the elderly (65 years and over) was the highest compared to other age groups, reaching 59.2% in 2008, while it was 0.8% among youth (15–24 years) for the same year.

Despite the low illiteracy rates, there were still about 126 thousand illiterate individuals in the WB and GS aged 15 years and over in 2008. There are approximately 84 thousands in the WB and 42 thousands in GS. According to their sex, there are around 31 thousand illiterate males and 95 thousand illiterate females.¹⁴

Time series indicate that the number of marriage contracts in 1997–2008 has increased steadily with the exception of the years 2000 and 2002, knowing that in 2002, the country—the WB in particular—went through very difficult economic and political conditions, the most important of which was the invasion of the WB and its reoccupation by the Israeli occupation. Data indicate that the number of registered marriage contracts in 2008 in the WB and GS has increased compared to 2007, as it reached 33,774 contracts in 2008 compared to 32,685 contracts in 2007, an increment of approximately 1,089 contracts. In the WB, the number of marriage contracts registered in 2008 was 19,006, a proportion of 56.3% of the marriage contracts registered in the WB and GS, which represents 430 more contracts than in the year 2007. Whereas in GS, the number of marriage contracts registered in 2008 was 14,768 contracts, a proportion of 43.7% of the number of contracts registered in the WB and GS, and it represents 659 more contracts than in the year 2007.¹⁵

The crude marriage rate was 8.8 marriages per one thousand of the population in 2008, in the WB and GS, with 8 in the WB and 10.3 in GS. Whereas the crude marriage rate in 2007 was 8.8 marriages per one thousand of the population, in the WB and GS, with 8 in the WB and 10.1 in GS.¹⁶

Early marriage is a phenomenon that is still prevailing in the WB and GS despite the marked rise in the median age for males at first marriage in 2008 as compared to 1997, which was 24.8 years for males compared to 23 years in 1997, while for females it was 19.5 years in 2008 compared to 18 years in 1997. In the WB, the median age at first marriage was 25.4 years for males and 19.8 years for females, whereas in GS, it was 24 years for males and 19 years for females in 2008.¹⁷

The number of registered divorces tends to rise in general, as the number of divorces registered at the Shari'a courts and churches in the WB and GS was 4,399 in 2008 compared to 4,043 divorces in 2007, i.e., an estimated rise of 356 divorces. On the other hand, the number of registered divorces at the Shari'a courts and churches in 2008 in the WB was 2,803 divorces, constituting 63.7% of the registered divorces in the WB and GS, thus, an increase of approximately 405 incidences compared to 2007. As for GS, the number of registered divorces was 1,596, constituting 36.3% of the registered divorces in the WB and GS in 2008, and an estimated drop of 49 divorces compared to 2007.¹⁸

The crude divorce rate in the WB and GS has reached 1.1 divorces per one thousand of the population in 2008, with 1.2 divorces per one thousand of the population in the WB and 1.1 divorces per one thousand of the population in GS. While in 2007 the crude divorce rate in the WB and GS was 1.1 divorces per one thousand of the population, with one divorce per one thousand of the population in the WB and 1.1 divorces per one thousand of the population in GS.¹⁹

The final results of the PHC-2007 indicate that 107,785 people in the WB have at least one disability—for a proportion of 5.3% of the total population of the WB—55,557 of whom are males and 52,228 are females.

Concerning the prevalence of disability in the governorates of the WB, the proportion of individuals showing at least one disability in the governorates of Tulkarm, Qalqilya and Salfit was approximately 6.7% of the total population of each governorate, whereas, the proportion was 5.9% in the governorate of Jenin versus 5.6% in the governorate of Nablus. On the other hand, the proportion of the prevalence of disability was 5.2% in the governorate of Bethlehem and 4.9% in the governorate of Tubas, whereas the proportion registered in the governorate of Jericho and al-Aghwar was 4.6%, while for both governorates of Ramallah-al-Bireh and Hebron the proportion was 4.5% of the total population in each governorate.

Census data showed that difficulty (disability) in vision represented the highest number of disabilities in the WB with 60,041 persons, 29,562 males and 30,479 females. On the other hand, difficulty (disability) in communication had the lowest number in the WB, totaling 14,781 persons, 7,899 males and 6,882 females.²⁰

The results of the PHC-2007 show that the number of occupied housing units in the WB and GS was 629,185 units, distributed by 414,493 in the WB and 214,692 in GS.

The average housing density in the WB and the GS in general was 1.7 persons per room in 2008; the average for the WB was 1.6 persons per room whereas the average for GS was 1.9 persons per room. Data also indicate that in the WB and GS 12.7% was the percentage of high density households with a housing density reaching three or more individuals per room. The average number of rooms in a housing unit is 3.6 rooms, in the WB and GS. Data show that 15.9% of the households in the WB and GS lived in housing units with 1–2 rooms, 16.9% in the WB versus 13.9% in GS.

The Figures of 2008 indicate that 51% of households, in the WB and GS, live in traditional house (*Dar*), while 47.2% live in apartments. Data also show that the proportion of families living in traditional houses in the WB is greater than in GS with 51.8% and 49.2% respectively, while those living in apartments are in a proportion of 45.8% in the WB and 50% in GS. With regard to household ownership, data indicate that 86.3% of families in the WB and GS live in housing units owned by a member of the family, while 9.2% live in rented housing units.²¹

The results of the Household Environmental Survey in the WB and GS for 2009 showed that 88.4% of households live in houses receiving water from the public water network, with 95.8% in GS and 84.5% in the WB. It showed that approximately 47.2% of Palestinian households live in houses connected to tight or porous cesspits, where waste water is disposed through; with 63.5% in the WB and 16% in GS. While there are 52.1% of Palestinian households are living in houses connected by public sewage network; with 35.5% in the WB and 83.8% in GS.²²

The results of the household energy survey 2009 indicate that the proportion of households in the WB and GS living in houses connected to the public electricity network maintained almost the same average of 2008 reaching 99.9% in 2009 compared to 99.8% in 2008.²³

Following is the distribution of population according to PCBS estimates, noting that the average household size remained unchanged according to the

census results of 1997 and 2007, knowing that those estimates assume that the sex ratio remained fixed in 2009 based on the 2007 census.

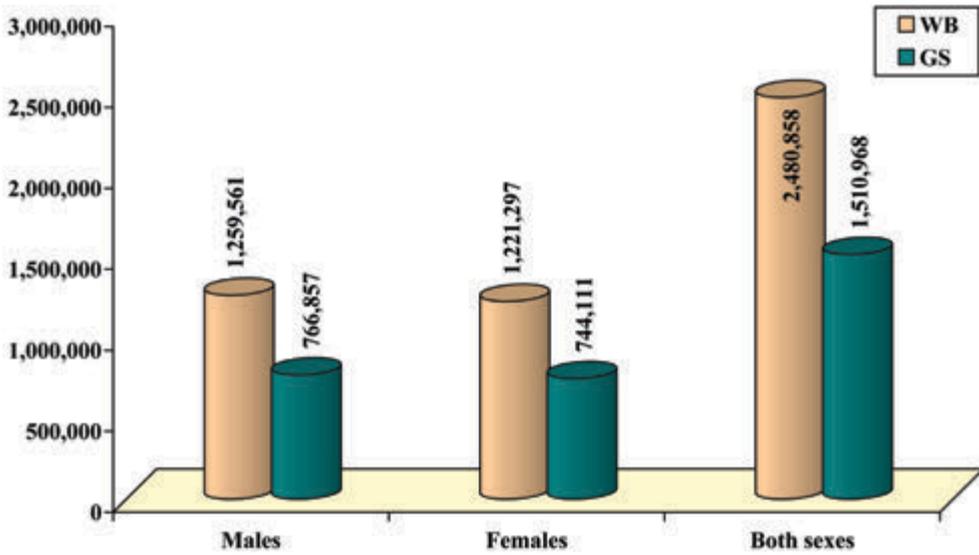
The following table summarizes the most important indicators by governorate in the WB and GS with some comparisons between censuses of 1997 and 2009.

Table 3/7: Estimated Population Count According to the Governorate, Region and Sex at the End of 2009²⁴

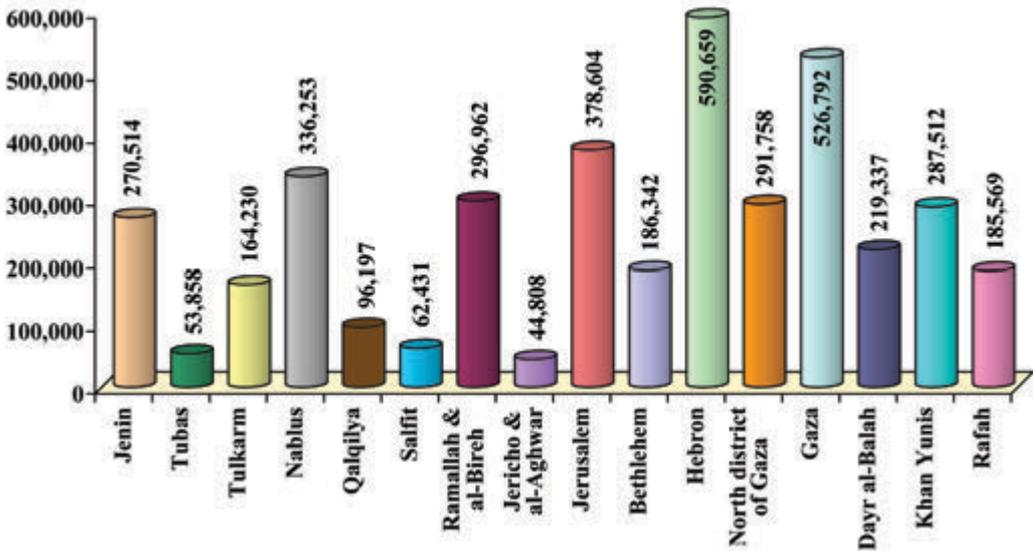
Governorate	Population count*			Average household size		Sex ratio	
	Males	Females	Both	1997	2007	1997	2009
WB	1,259,561	1,221,297	2,480,858	6.1	5.5	103.2	103.1
Jenin	137,405	133,109	270,514	5.9	5.4	103.8	103.2
Tubas	27,358	26,500	53,858	6.1	5.6	103.1	103.3
Tulkarm	82,970	81,260	164,230	5.8	5.3	102.2	102.1
Nablus	170,064	166,189	336,253	5.9	5.4	103.3	102.3
Qalqilya	49,323	46,874	96,197	6.1	5.5	105.7	105.2
Salfit	31,734	30,697	62,431	6	5.4	103.6	103.3
Ramallah & al-Bireh	149,523	147,439	296,962	5.9	5.3	100.4	101.4
Jericho & al-Aghwar	22,435	22,373	44,808	6	5.6	101.7	100.3
Jerusalem	192,604	186,000	378,604	5.4	5.2	102.1	103.5
Bethlehem	94,903	91,439	186,342	5.8	5.4	104.8	103.8
Hebron	301,242	289,417	590,659	6.7	6.1	104.9	104.1
GS	766,857	744,111	1,510,968	6.9	6.5	103.1	103.1
North district of Gaza	148,595	143,163	291,758	7.2	6.7	103.7	103.7
Gaza	267,999	258,793	526,792	6.9	6.5	103.6	103.5
Dayr al-Balah	110,600	108,737	219,337	6.9	6.4	102.4	101.6
Khan Yunis	146,016	141,496	287,512	6.9	6.3	102.5	103.1
Rafah	93,647	91,922	185,569	6.9	6.5	102	101.8
Total (WB & GS)	2,026,418	1,965,408	3,991,826	6.4	5.8	103.2	103.1

* The number of males and females in the governorates are based on the researcher's estimates based on PCBS data of mid 2009 and 2010, assuming a fixed sex ratio in each governorate according to the 2007 census results.

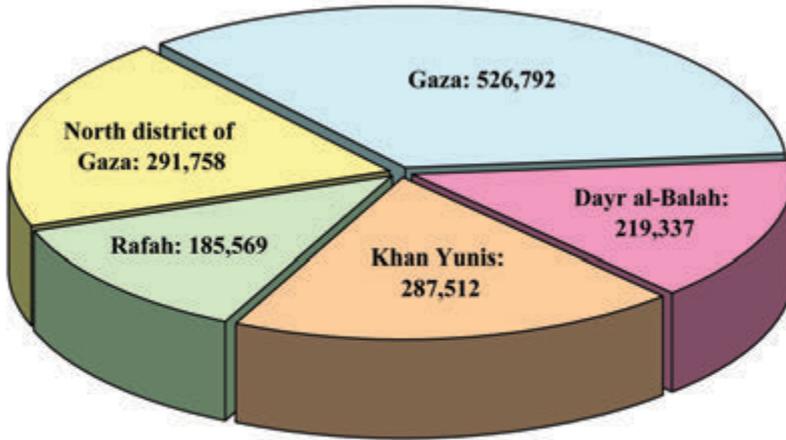
Population Count in the WB and GS at the End of 2009



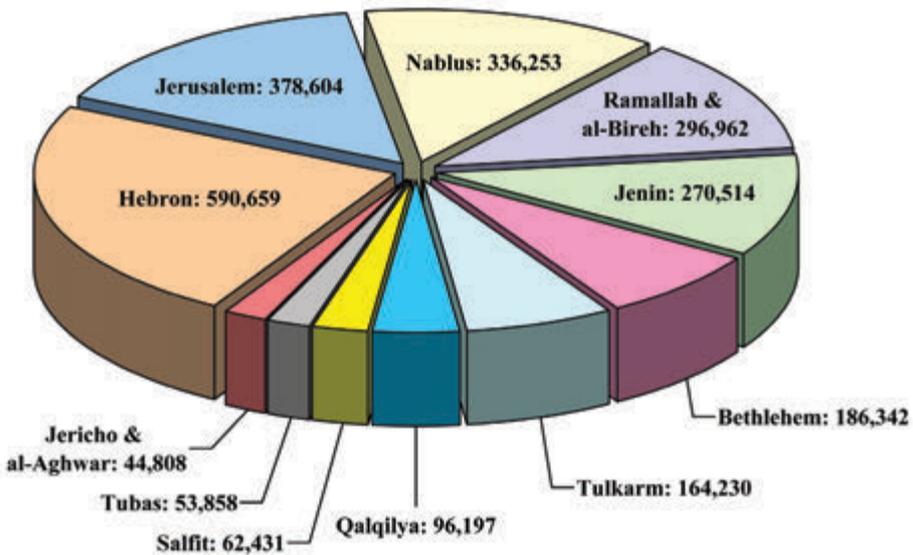
Population Count by Governorate at the End of 2009



Population Count in GS Governorates at the End of 2009



Population Count in the WB Governorates at the End of 2009



The population is distributed on 16 governorates, 5 of which are in GS and 11 in the WB, where Hebron is the largest governorate in terms of population, with an estimated population of approximately 591 thousand inhabitants, at the end of 2009, followed by Gaza governorate, with an estimated population of approximately 527 thousands. The third is Jerusalem with an estimated population of 379 thousands, for the same year. The governorates with the smallest population are Jericho, Tubas, Salfit and Qalqilya with estimated populations of approximately 45 thousands, 54 thousands, 62 thousands and 96 thousands respectively.

According to the population census results, the average household size has dropped from 6.4 in 1997 to 5.8 in 2007. It can also be noted that the average household size has dropped significantly in all Palestinian governorates during the period of 1997–2007, and assuming that this trend will persist, the average household size will drop by an estimate of one person about every 17 years in the WB and GS.

2. Palestinian Territories Occupied in 1948 (Israel)

The estimated number of Palestinians living in Israel by the end of 2009 was approximately 1.25 million Palestinians. Available data for the year 2008 on Palestinians living in Israel revealed that their society is a young one, as 40% of the population are aged under 15 years and 3.1% are aged 65 years and over.²⁵

The total fertility rate for Palestinians living in Israel has reached 3.62 births per woman for the year 2007; this rate is considered to be relatively high when compared to the Israeli fertility rates. Data also indicate that the average Palestinian household size has reached five members in 2007. And the CBR for the year 2007 was approximately 27.3 births per one thousand of population, whereas the neonatal mortality rate for the same year was 7.2 deaths per one thousand live births, knowing that the sex ratio for the year 2007 has reached 103.6 males per 100 females. With regard to the illiteracy rate among Palestinians aged 15 years and over, it has reached 6.1%. There are 26.2% of the Palestinian families in Israel live in housing units with a housing density ranging between two individuals and more. These data do not include the Arab population in the Syrian Golan Heights nor does it include the population in J1 of Jerusalem as well as the Lebanese who have moved for a temporary residence in Israel. While Israel takes into consideration all of these groups within its population and within Arab population as a whole.²⁶

3. Jordan

At the end of 2009, the Palestinian population in Jordan was estimated to be around 3.24 million, according to the PCBS estimates. Available data indicate also that Palestinians living in Jordan in 2007 constitute a relatively young community where 35.9% are aged below 15 years. The total fertility rate among Palestinians in Jordan was 3.3 births per woman and the Palestinian average household size has reached 5.1 members in 2007.

In 2000, Palestinians living in Jordan aged 15 years and over were distributed according to their marital status with a proportion of 50.2% males classified as never married as opposed to 37.4% females. It can be noticed that the highest percentage of those who never married is in the age group (15–19 years) with 99.2% males and 87.9% females. A high proportion of Palestinian female widows can be noticed in Jordan as it has reached 2.6% for females compared to 0.6% male widowers.

The total fertility rate among Palestinian women in Jordan was approximately 3.3 births per woman in 2007 with women in the age group (25–29 years) contributing mostly in this rate which reached 173.6 births per one thousand women. And the total fertility rate among women in the age group (30–34 years) was 149.2 births per one thousand women in 2007. The average Palestinian household size has reached 5.1 members in 2007. The neonatal mortality rate in the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan was 22.5 deaths per one thousand live births in 2004, while the under five mortality rate of children (U5MR) was 25.1 deaths per one thousand live births for the same year.²⁷

According to the statistics of the UNRWA, as of 31/12/2009 there were about 1.98 million registered Palestinian refugees compared to around 1.95 million Palestinian refugees registered at the UNRWA and residing in Jordan at the same date of the year 2008. This means that the population growth rate for registered Palestinian refugees is estimated at around 1.6% per year, and account for 405,666 families, 17.2% of whom live in refugee camps (see table 5/7).²⁸

4. Syria

The number of UNRWA registered Palestinian refugees in Syria, as of 31/12/2009, was about 472,109 people, for an estimated sex ratio of 100.4 males per 100 females. The Palestinian population is mostly concentrated in Damascus,

where registered Palestinians account for 67% of the total Palestinian refugees registered in Syria. When comparing the Palestinian population registered at the UNRWA as refugees in Syria on 31/12/2009 with the number of refugees on the 31/12/2008 which was 461,897 people, we find that the average annual population growth rate can be estimated at 2.2%. Palestinian refugees in Syria constitute around 117,806 families of whom around 27.1% live in refugee camps; noting that the aforementioned refugee number does not include the Palestinians who were displaced to Syria in 1967 and 1970, since the majority of them are not registered at UNRWA (see table 5/7).²⁹

The available data on the Palestinians residing in Syria in 2007 indicate that 33.1% of the population was aged below 15 years, and that the average Palestinian household size was 4.9 members. On the other hand, the total fertility rate in 2007 among Palestinians in Syria was 3.64 births per woman with women in the age group (25–29 years) contributing mostly in this rate which reached 216.1 births per one thousand women in the same age group. The total fertility rate for women in the age group (30–34 years) was 184 births per one thousand women. As for the CBR, it has reached 29.3 births per one thousand of the population. The neonatal mortality rate in 2006 among Palestinians in Syria was 25 deaths per one thousand live births, whereas the average mortality rate among children below 5 years of age was 30 deaths per one thousand live births for the same period.

Palestinians aged 15 years and over residing in Syria in 2007 were distributed according to their marital status with a proportion of 48.3% males classified as never married and 40.8% females. It can be noticed that the highest percentage of those who never married is in the age group (15–19 years) with 100% males and 92.7% females, a high proportion of Palestinian female widows can be noticed in Syria as it has reached 4.2% females compared to 0.5% male widowers.³⁰

5. Lebanon

The number of Palestinian residents registered at the UNRWA as refugees as of 31/12/2009 and residing in Lebanon was 425,640 people, compared to 422,188 people on the same date of the year 2008, hence an average annual population growth rate estimated at only 0.8%. The refugees in Lebanon constitute 113,594 families, 53.2% of which live in refugee camps. The average Palestinian household size in Lebanon is 3.73 members for the year 2009, compared to 3.8 members in 2008 (see table 5/7).³¹

The available data on the Palestinians residing in Lebanon in 2007 indicate that 32.9% of the population was aged below 15 years, whereas the percentage aged 65 years and over was 5.4%. The sex ratio was 98.4 males per 100 females. Data also indicate that 0.5% of household size ranges between 6–7 members. On the other hand, the total fertility rate was 3 births per woman in 2007 and the neonatal mortality rate in 2004 among Palestinian living in Lebanon was 19.2 deaths per one thousand live births. The mortality rate of children below 5 years of age was 20.2 deaths per one thousand live births in 2004, and the CBR was 21.8 births per one thousand of the population in 2007.

The proportion of Palestinian population in Lebanon who are above 15 years of age and who have never married was 44.1% with 47.9% males and 40.5% females. The proportion of those who have been married was 48.7% with 49.6% males and 47.9% females. The proportion of divorced was 1.5% with 0.8% males and 2% females and the proportion of widows among Palestinians residing in Lebanon was around 5.7% with 1.7% male widowers and 9.6% female widows, those figures being for the year 2006.

With regard to the classification of women (15–49 years) based on their level of education for the year 2007, less than 4.5% were uneducated, while 76.5% have completed elementary or preparatory school and 19.1% have high school diplomas or higher.³²

6. Iraq

The situation of the Palestinians in Iraq doesn't match with the situation of Palestinians in any other country. The Palestinians have endured in Iraq after the American occupation killings, kidnappings and forcible displacement by some militias, which forced the majority of the population to be displaced from one place to another, whether inside or outside Iraq, or in temporary refugee camps set up on the borders shared by Iraq and its neighboring countries.

It is also worth mentioning that the number of Palestinian refugees in Iraq has been reduced from 34 thousand refugees, officially registered before the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, to an estimated 10 thousand to 15 thousand Palestinians in 2008, after the militias had killed, injured and displaced thousands of them.³³ In addition, in March 2008, the PLO Department of Refugee Affairs also estimated the number of Palestinian refugees who were still in Iraq at 15 thousand refugees.³⁴

Since 2003, Palestinians are living the horrors of forcible displacement and hardship inside the refugee camps on the borders in much deteriorated social, economical and security conditions resulting from a bad environmental situation. In addition the camps suffer deterioration of the health situation and lack adequate treatments and have urgent need for treatments in hospitals. A number of deaths have been reported in the refugee camps of al-Tanf, al-Waleed and al-Hol because of the deterioration of their health condition.³⁵

In 2009, Majed al-Zeer, the Director General of the London based Palestinian Return Centre (PRC) said that two thousand Palestinian refugees displaced from Iraq to Cyprus are facing many difficulties in their new life, and announced that the “PRC is trying to help as much as possible all the Palestinian refugees across the world. We are to launch a legal unit in support of their cause which has been founded 61 years ago. This unit aims at solving their problems legally and address their concerns.” This came during an inspection visit by al-Zeer to the Palestinian refugees who fled their houses from Iraq to Cyprus. Majed al-Zeer confirmed the PRC’s support for the refugees and what haunts them, as they now face many problems after their arrival to Cyprus. The most important of these problems is the different language and education, the challenges to engage in a European culture far from their Arabic and Islamic values and customs, aside from the identity and cultural issues.³⁶

The PRC expressed its deepest regrets for the marginalization and dereliction of the Palestinian refugees in Iraq from the Arab community. A statement published by the PRC said that despite blood, religion and brotherhood bonds between Palestinians and their Arab brothers, refugees are being settled in Sweden, Iceland, Brazil, India, Cyprus, Malaysia, and finally the USA, while the Arab regimes did not bat an eyelid to help in their cause. The American Newspaper *The Wall Street Journal* had reported that the US administration agreed to resettle 1,350 Palestinian Refugees that had been displaced from Iraq after the US invasion in one of the American states. According to the newspaper, this approval came after a request from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The PRC added that since 2003 and before, Arab governments along with the PLO have ignored those refugees’ rights and those governments have not provided them with any political or financial support, but they were slaughtered and killed on sectarian bases by sectarian militias in Iraq. The current Iraqi government is neglecting to do its duty towards the refugees, as it does not recognize them because they hold

identities issued during the regime of former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein, nor does it give them new identities, and above all, those refugees are not registered on the lists of the UNRWA.³⁷

PRC's statement also said that at the end of 2007, the UNHCR has closed the al-Ruwayshid refugee camp after it had resettled the refugees in Brazil and other European countries, while the UNHCR continues to work in al-Waleed and al-Tanf camps to resettle Palestinian refugees in European countries. The affairs of the refugees are being followed-up by the UNHCR office in Syria, their number in the al-Waleed refugee camp is around 1,700 refugees belonging to 322 families³⁸ while the number of refugees in al-Tanf has reached around 880 refugees in 2009.³⁹

On 17/4/2009, the spokesperson of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Jemini Pandya, has declared that 59 Palestinians have been transferred from al-Waleed camp to a center in Romania and she added that they will be later transferred to other countries in the framework of a resettlement program of the UNHCR. It has been decided that 1,200 Palestinians will be transferred from al-Waleed camp to the transit center in Romania, on their way to a resettlement in the USA and Britain. Pandya said that the center has been inaugurated in March 2009 as a result of a tripartite agreement between the Romanian government, the UNHCR and the IOM. It should also be noted that more than 30 countries had received Palestinian refugees on its territory, including Australia, Finland, the Czech Republic, Turkey, USA, UK, France, New Zealand and others.⁴⁰

On the political side, Palestinian President Mahmud 'Abbas and Iraqi President Jalal Talabani held a press conference in Baghdad on 5/4/2009, during which Talabani stated that the Iraqi people had always been... with the Palestinian People in heart and in mind... and they hope to play a true and historical role in contributing to achieving the goal for which the Palestinian people are fighting today, namely the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the land of stand regarding this issue. For his part, President 'Abbas expressed his thanks to the Iraqi government for its interest in the situation of the Palestinians living in Iraq, as it "considers them as part of the Iraqi people and part of the government's concern and a part of Iraqi security," he said. "We are sure they are in safe hands."⁴¹

According to *al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper many Palestinian sources confirmed on 21/4/2009 that President 'Abbas has formed a commission to supervise the transfer of Palestinian refugees on the Iraqi-Syrian borders to the Kurdistan Region and to Sudan. This happened after having an agreement with the president

of the Kurdistan Region, Massoud Barzani, and the Prime minister of the Region Najirfan Barzani to facilitate matters for the Palestinian refugees and provide them with job opportunities. Thus, their sufferings would be alleviated, according to understandings concluded by President 'Abbas during his visit to Kurdistan Region on 13/4/2009. However, sources denied news reporting the idea of naturalization of Palestinian refugees in Kurdistan, pointing out that what was agreed upon with the Kurdistan Region authorities was to provide refugees with job opportunities and to facilitate their children's education. In a press statement published by the Fatah Movement website and Sama News Agency, the spokesman of Fatah clarified that the task of the commission formed by 'Abbas is to study the Palestinian refugees' situation on the Iraqi-Syrian borders, to solve their problems, evacuate them from this area and house them elsewhere. According to Sama News Agency, sources stated that an agreement was settled between the delegation and Sudanese leaders to provide Palestinian refugees from al-Waleed camp with all facilities, to transfer them to Sudan, to provide them with facilities and to grant them the right of residency and the right to education. The sources pointed out that it has been agreed to transfer nine thousand Palestinian refugees from the Iraqi-Syrian borders to Sudan after fulfilling all formalities.⁴²

On the other hand, Arab diplomatic sources revealed to the Jordanian newspaper *Addustour* a resolution draft that was to be submitted to the Arab leaders during the Arab summit, pertaining to the deportation of Palestinians from Iraqi borders to Sudan. The project welcomes the agreement that has been signed between the Sudan, the Palestinian side and the UNHCR and which sets to deport the Palestinians to Sudan for temporary residency, and to try to give them full rights and privileges. The project welcomes the steps undertaken so far especially the visit of a refugee delegation to Sudan, it requests from Arab countries to provide assistance in the refugees' transfer from the borders to Sudan and mandates the Secretary-General to follow-up on this matter. Arab diplomatic sources stated that the reason for withdrawing the resolution draft was the objection of Sudan and other Arab countries for several considerations; as they preferred to conduct this operation normally in coordination with international organizations without legislating it as a decree in an Arab summit. Those sources said that an idea was proposed to settle for what was stated in Damascus Summit concerning the deportation of refugees from their camp at the borders. The sources also stated that there were fears of consecrating what could be understood that in this way, the right of return would be lost.⁴³

For its part, Syria called for the need to put pressure on Israel for the return of Palestinian refugees displaced from Iraq to their lands,⁴⁴ but it has allowed the establishment of refugee camps within its territory, and after a while, it has also allowed some of them to enter its cities.

7. General Comparisons Among Palestinians

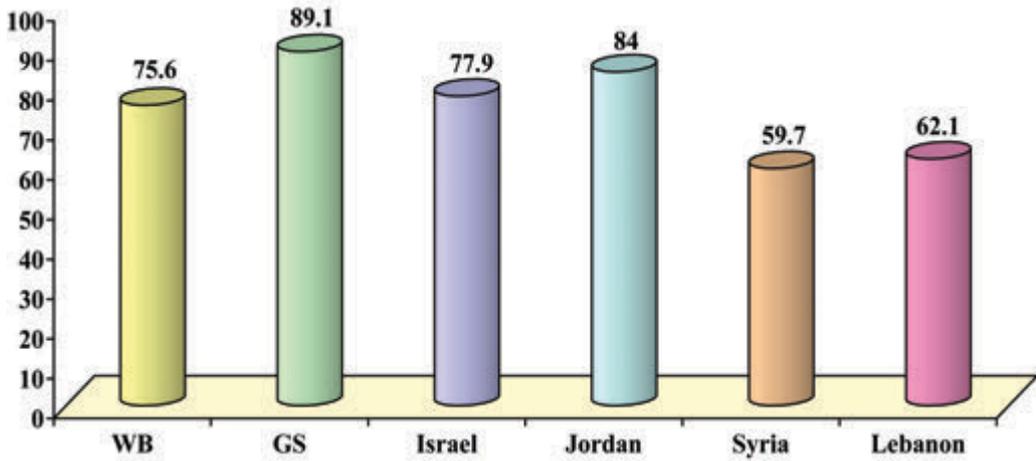
The following comparative table represents a summary of the most important comparisons of some demographic indicators among Palestinians for 2007 and 2009 (unless otherwise indicated between parentheses).

Table 4/7: Selected Demographic Indicators for Palestinians According to Their Place of Residence⁴⁵

Indicator	WB 2009	GS 2009	WB & GS 2009	Israel 2007	Jordan 2007	Syria 2007	Lebanon 2007
% of individuals 15 years or less	39.7	44.6	41.5	40 (2008)	35.9	33.1	32.9
% of individuals 65 years or over	3.4	2.4	3	3.1 (2008)	5.2	4.3	5.4
Dependency rate (per 100 individuals 15–64 years)	75.6	89.1	80.5	77.9	84	59.7	62.1
Sex ratio (males per 100 females)	103.1	103.1	103.1	103.6 (2008)	-	100.4	98.4
Crude birth rate (births per 1,000 inhabitants)	30.1	36.9	32.7	27.3	-	29.3	21.8
Crude death rate (deaths per 1,000 inhabitants)	4.4	4.1	4.3	2.8 (2006)	-	2.8 (2006)	-
Total fertility rate (births per woman)	4.1 (2007)	5.3 (2007)	4.6 (2007)	3.62	3.3	3.64	3
Natural population growth	2.6	3.3	2.9	2.51	-	2.65	-
Average household size (individuals per house)	5.5 (2007)	6.5 (2007)	5.8 (2007)	5	5.1	4.9	3.73 (2009)

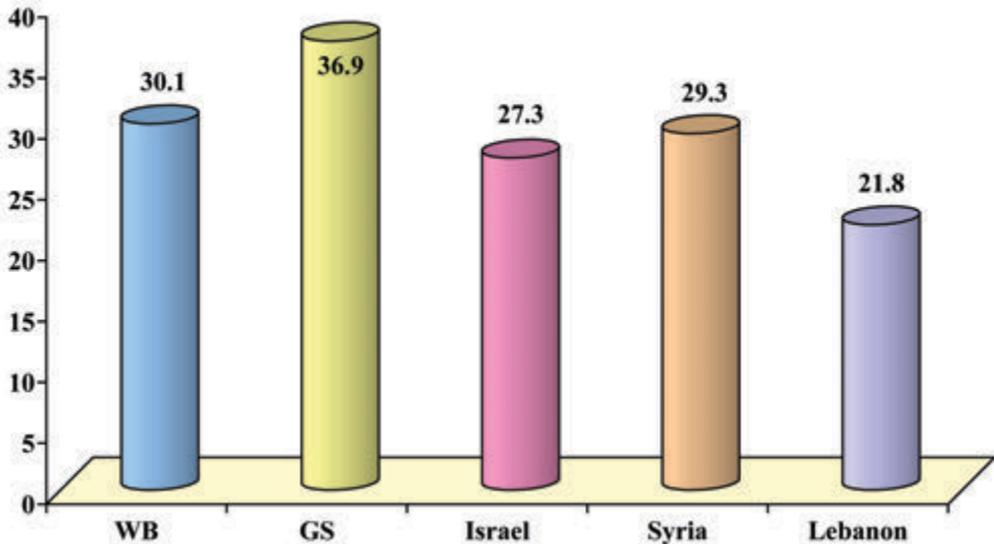
Note: (-) means data is not available.

Dependency Rates of Palestinians According to Their Place of Residence (%)



Note: The dependency rate in the WB and GS is for 2009, while it is for 2007 in Israel, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

Crude Birth Rate of Palestinians According to Their Place of Residence



Note: The crude birth rate in the WB and GS is for 2009, while it is for 2007 in Israel, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.

According to table 4/7, we note the following:

- In general, there is an increase in the number of the elderly and a decrease in the number of children, and this is mainly due to the decrease in the birth rate and other fertility rates.
- The crude birth rates are the highest in the GS and WB, and the lowest in Lebanon and Israel, and this causes demographic pressures on the GS specifically.
- Not only did the crude death rates remain high in the WB and GS, but they also increased compared with 2006, where it reached 3.9. This is mainly due to the Israeli occupation, procedures and racist policies since decades—particularly its killing operations.
- The natural population growth rates (the difference between the birth and death rates) has dropped in the WB and GS. Yet they are still considered high especially in GS.
- The dependency rate in the GS is the highest, followed by the dependency rate of the Palestinians in Jordan, then those in the 1948 occupied territories, whereas Syria and Lebanon represent the lowest dependency rate. Moreover, the highest percentage of those aged 65 and above is in Lebanon, followed by Jordan, and the lowest percentage is in the GS.
- There is a constant decrease of the average household size in the WB and GS compared with the previous years, but this average remains the highest in the GS, with 6.5 members per house compared to only 5.5 in the WB. The lowest average household size is in Lebanon and Syria.

Third: The Palestinian Refugees

The concept of being a refugee and the measurement of this concept constitute a dilemma for researchers on the subject (refer to the *Palestinian Strategic Report 2006*), and this is mainly due to many factors, among which: the great number of wars and conflicts in the region during the 20th century, especially the 1948 war and the 1967 war, which were followed by the occupation of all Palestine, the first Palestinian *Intifadah* (1987–1990), the second Palestinian *Intifadah* (2000–2006), the multiplicity of the sides controlling the Palestinian regions since British mandate, and the Jordanian annexation of the WB during 1948–1967.

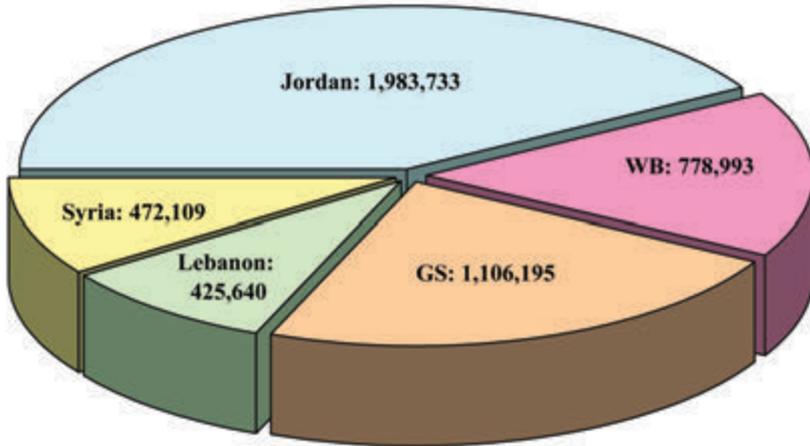


If we were to assume that the number of refugees is really the one that is registered with UNRWA, then the number of refugees registered until 31/12/2009 is as depicted in the table below, with a note from UNRWA: “UNRWA records are based on voluntary reporting by the refugees themselves and, accordingly, are indicative rather than conclusive in respect of the number of Palestine refugees.”

Table 5/7: Number of Individuals, Births and Families of the Palestinian Refugees Registered with UNRWA in Its Areas of Operations⁴⁶

Indicator	WB	GS	Lebanon	Syria	Jordan	Total
Individuals (31/12/2009)	778,993	1,106,195	425,640	472,109	1,983,733	4,766,670
Births (30/9/2009)	7,309	23,710	3,539	7,892	18,744	61,149
Average family size 2006	4	4.6	3.9	4.2	5.1	4.6
Average family size (30/9/2009)	3.79	4.43	3.73	3.99	4.87	4.35
Families (30/9/2009)	204,674	248,057	113,594	117,806	405,666	1,089,797
Camps (31/12/2009)	19	8	12	9	10	58
Individuals living in camps (31/12/2009)	197,763	502,747	226,533	127,831	341,494	1,396,368
% of individuals living in camps 2006	25.8	47	52.9	26.6	17.7	29.8
% of individuals living in camps (31/12/2009)	25.4	45.4	53.2	27.1	17.2	29.3

Number of Palestinian Refugees Registered with UNRWA in Its Areas of Operation as of 31/12/2009



Number of Individuals in Camps Registered with UNRWA in Its Areas of Operation as of 31/12/2009

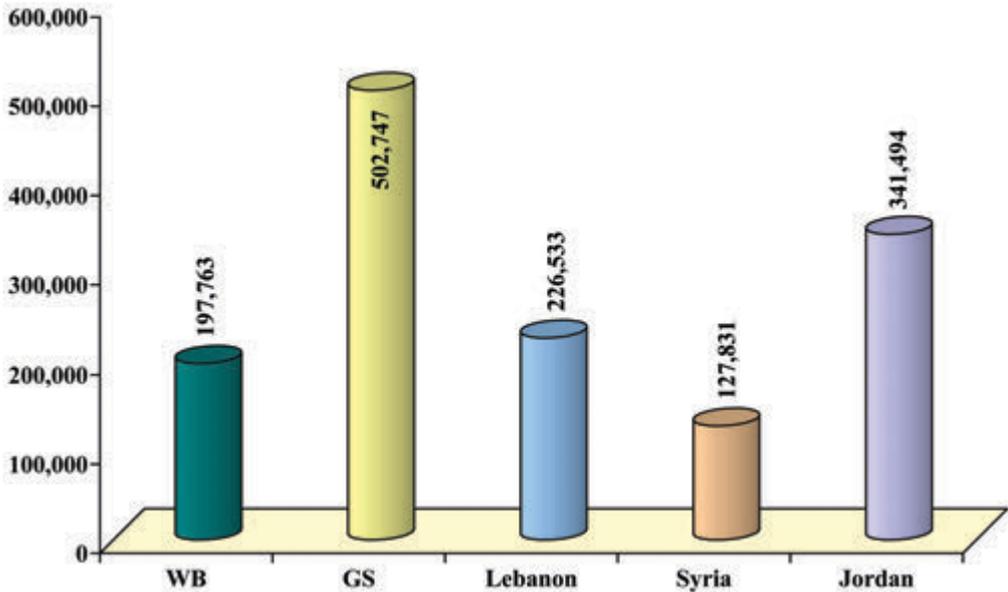


Table 5/7 shows that the number of Palestinian refugees registered in the five regions where UNRWA operates is estimated until 31/12/2009 at around 4.77 million, of which around 41.6% live in Jordan, 39.5% in the 1967 occupied Palestinian territories (23.2% in the GS and 16.3% in the WB), and the rest 18.8% are registered in Syria and Lebanon.

It is noted that the percentage of the inhabitants of Palestinian refugee camps reached 29.3% in 2009, while it was 29.4% in 2008, and 29.8% in 2006. It is also noted that the percentage of camp inhabitants in Lebanon and the GS is the highest compared to the other regions.

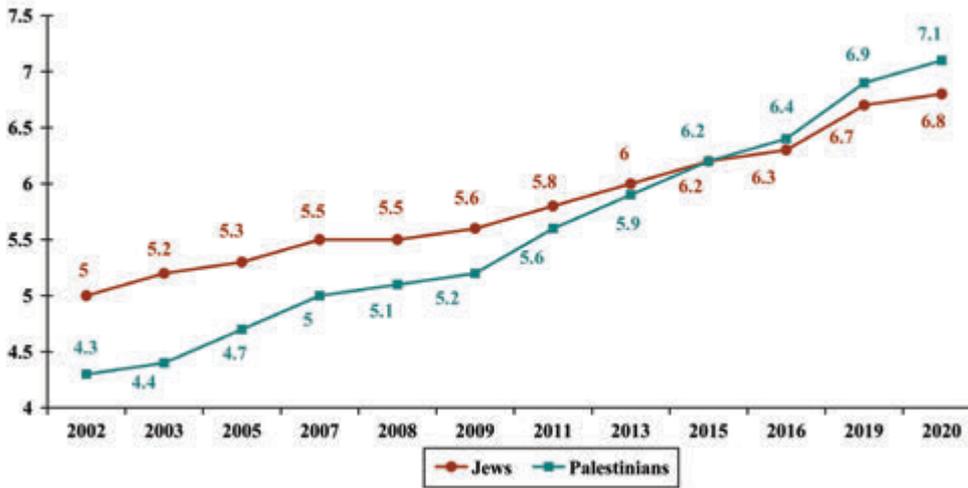
Table 5/7 also shows that the average family size here does not actually represent extended families that live together in the same place, but rather the nuclear family, which has an independent family card assigned to it. Hence, it is not unusual for the average nuclear family size to be less than the average extended family size. This average decreases with time, as we note that in all the regions where refugees are found where the average family size slightly decreases, as the general average decreased from 4.6 members for each family in 2006 to 4.35 members in 2009.

If we look at the number of refugees registered during the 39 years 1970–2009, we find that their registered number in the middle of 1970 was 1,425,219 refugees, then 4,718,899 refugees the middle of 2009. The average annual demographic growth for the refugees registered during the aforementioned period is calculated at 3.1%. Based on this rate, and assuming it is stable in the future as it is calculated over a long period, the number of registered refugees will double throughout 22.7 years approximately. Since the annual growth rate is constant, the annual average of 3.1% for the growth in the number of Palestinian refugees in the world is trustworthy.

Fourth: Demographic Growth Trends

The estimations of the PCBS indicate that the number of Palestinians in historical Palestine reached around 5.2 million at the end of 2009, while the number of Jews was around 5.6 million based on the estimations of the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). The number of Palestinians and Jews will become on par by the end of 2015, as it will reach approximately 6.2 million, if the current growth rates remain the same. By the end of 2020, only 48.9% of the population will be Jews, as their number will reach 6.8 million as opposed to 7.1 million Palestinians.

Estimated Number of Palestinians and Jews in Historical Palestine in Selected Years (millions)⁴⁷



Fertility, death, and emigration are considered the main elements and factors in demographic change and growth in any state or region. Emigration does not affect the estimations of the total number of Palestinians in the world, but rather their geographical distribution and place of residence. Thus, the factors that affect the true trends of demographical growth are restricted to the fertility and death rates and trends of Palestinian societies around the world.

On the level of the WB and the GS, there are noticeable differences in their fertility rates, as the aforementioned sources point out that the total fertility rate in the WB decreased from 5.6 births in 1997 to 4.1 births in 2007, while it decreased in the GS from 6.9 births to 5.3 births during the same period. As for the annual natural growth rates for Palestinians in the WB and the GS, they decreased from 3.8% to 2.9% in 1997 and 2007 respectively, and this was accompanied by a decrease in the CBR from 42.7 births per one thousand inhabitants to 32.7 births per one thousand inhabitants during the same period.

Regarding the Palestinians in the world, their number at the end of 2009 was estimated at around 10.87 million as opposed to 10.6 million in 2008, with an average annual growth rate 2.6%. This is an average rate that can be used to estimate the number of Palestinians in the world.

Hence, there is a constant demographic increase despite the decrease in the expected demographic growth rates for Palestinians in historical Palestine, especially in the WB and GS. It must be noted that this increase is greater in the GS than in the WB.

Fifth: Israeli Measures to Influence the Palestinian Demographics

The year 2009 witnessed an unprecedented frenzied campaign in the demographic struggle on the Palestinian land, especially in Jerusalem and its suburbs. The number of Palestinian inhabitants represents what is known as the demographic threat, and is used in two trends: the first trend confirms that Palestinians represent the minority, and thus they have to either accept the majority or face exile (transfer) or genocide; the second trend states that Palestinians represent a demographic bomb whose explosion cannot be awaited. Hence, all the means are used to displace, imprison, and kill the Palestinians and tighten economic and social life conditions for them and their children. Therefore, both trends have the same objective.

Jerusalem and the Triangle region in Palestinian territories occupied in 1948 represent a real and serious demographic struggle. Specialists expect a continued increase in the number of Palestinians for the coming years, and therefore the occupation will continue taking measures to overcome this by expelling Palestinians and bringing in more Jews.

There is an outcry in Israel and the world regarding what is known as “the Jewishness of Israel.” It has become familiar to discuss final status issues and the role of the Arab minority in Israel, and it has become familiar that some Israeli leaders speak of expelling the Palestinians to PA territories. There are continued attempts to evict them and confiscate their lands or to attempt to prevent them from building on their lands and follow the policy of demolishing houses under the pretext of absence of permit. This is not to mention marginalizing and detaching them from their people and their Arab and Islamic nation. In addition, all types of pressures and measures are used to influence the Palestinian demographics through the Green Line.

Influencing the demographics through the Green Line and in the WB and GS takes many forms, and Israeli governments and parties are extremely innovative

in this matter. Among these innovations is the internal closure policy, whereby a report issued by OCHA-oPt revealed that occupation increases limitations on the movements of Palestinians in the WB, whereby tens of Palestinians were arrested within two weeks. Also, the Israeli army conducted more than 100 searches of houses and civil institutions.⁴⁸

A report by Mossawa Center, the Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens in Israel, that was issued on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination confirms the increase of Israeli assaults on the Palestinians of the 1948 areas. The report, which monitored racism according to the recognized local and international standards, indicated a rise in racial discrimination incidents.⁴⁹

For the seventh time, Israel is extending the racial Citizenship Law, which tears apart thousands of Palestinian families in the 1948 areas, if one of the spouses is from the WB and GS, despite the condemnation of this law by legal sides, among which is the Israeli Supreme Court even. This law gives the “right” to the Minister of Interior to refrain from giving a residency permit to one of the Palestinian spouses if they are from the WB or GS for security purposes. The new formulation even completely prohibits issuing any residency permit to GS inhabitants.

Deputy Mohammad Barakeh, the head of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, said that this is one example—albeit a particularly harsh one—of the Israeli racist policy that wants to control Palestinian individuals. The Israeli government is aware of the problem this law poses regarding human rights. It is why it ratifies it according to a formulation of an emergency law, in order to avoid any international legal objection—that is, if it listens to the international criticism regarding its racist policy in the first place.⁵⁰

The Knesset also passed Israel Lands Administration Law (Amendment No. 7). This land privatization law consecrates the pillage of Palestinian land and properties and stipulates the privatization of confiscated Palestinian land as well as the properties of the Palestinian refugees who were obliged to leave their homeland since *al-Nakbah* in 1948.

The head of the National Democratic Assembly at the Knesset, Jamal Zahalka, considered that the new law is a consecration of the pillage of Palestinian land and properties, which started in 1948 and is still ongoing. He said that the law is discriminatory, as it allows lands, in the agrarian and small towns, to be allocated in accordance with “admissions committee” mechanisms and only to candidates

approved by Jewish and Zionist organizations, such as the Jewish Agency and Jewish National Fund (JNF), that was created by the Fifth Zionist Congress, thus completely excluding Arabs from buying land or housing in these towns. Consequently, this law led to a deal between the Hebrew state and the Jewish National Fund, whereby 70 thousand donums are transferred to the Fund, which prohibits the sale or lease of the land it controls to Arabs. Zahalka added, “This law will bar Arabs from residing in dozens of communities. The Arab public does not recognize the legitimacy of this law and anything that derives from it.”⁵¹

A report issued by OCHA-oPt stated Palestinian construction is effectively prohibited in 44% of the WB, in areas that have been largely designated for the use of Israeli settlements or the Israeli military. The report also stated that Israel’s planning regime in Area C directly contributes to the poor living conditions confronting many Palestinian residents of the WB, as it is hard for them to obtain building permits from Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) for vital infrastructure projects, schools and clinics.

In addition, the report revealed that as a result of this restrictive planning regime, tens of thousands of Palestinians wishing to build in most parts of Area C are left with no choice other than to carry-out “unauthorized” construction on their land to meet their housing needs and risk demolition of their structures and subsequent displacement. In 2009, Israel demolished 180 Palestinian-owned structures in Area C.⁵²

Sixth: The Palestinian Emigration and Brain Drain

A Palestinian public survey conducted by Near East Consulting (NEC) revealed that 23% of Palestinians prefer to move to another country if they had the chance to do so. Of those who wish to leave, 30% in the GS and 17% in the WB. It is also highest among young people, especially males.

The survey also showed that 8% of the respondents said that a member of their household has migrated internally. That internal migration was primarily targeting the Ramallah governorate, followed by the governorates of Khan Younis, Gaza, Jericho and Nablus.

According to the survey, the crushing majority of the respondents, i.e., 86% are concerned over the future: 91% in the GS and 82% in the WB. The results show

that the main source of concern in the WB is the economic hardship, where it is 38% in the WB compared with 16% in the GS. The main source of concern in the GS is the Israeli occupation (34%) and the internal struggle of forces (29%).⁵³

The results of this survey must be taken with caution, as the Israeli occupation remains the main reason behind most of the problems of Palestinians who endure it, whether these problems are political, economic or security-related.

Seventh: The Palestinians Outside Palestine and the Right of Return

The bet that the Palestinian people will accept to waive the right of return and will forget Palestine in two or more generations, or will accept another alternative that does not include the right of return, is a losing bet. All the Palestinian sides and parties adhere to this right, and the related surveys reveal that the successive generations will not waive the right of return, but rather that the Palestinian people have become more adamant about its presence on its land than ever before.

Beirut Center for Research and Information conducted a poll on the right of return, as commissioned by the Thabit Organization for the Right of Return. This poll adopted a statistical methodology that takes into account the demographic distribution in the various Palestinian camps, in addition to the various age groups of both genders. The results pointed out that 89% believe that the return will happen, 94% want a unified political reference, 43.2% give the priority to social and civil rights, and only 9.6% consider that the international community (negotiations and peace settlement) can achieve the return.⁵⁴

In the seventh Palestinians in Europe Conference, Palestinian leaders and officials stressed on the fact that the right of return to the Palestinian lands which they were coerced to leave in 1948 does not have a statute of limitation. They added that the Palestinian generations will not stop working towards the return to the land of their fathers and forefathers. This was said during the speeches of Palestinian officials at the closing of the Palestinians in Europe Conference, under the theme “Return is a right, no Consent and no Concession,” which was held on 2/5/2009 in Milano, Italy, in presence of more than ten thousand Palestinians. The conference’s secretary-general, ‘Adil ‘Abdullah, stressed on the inevitability of the

return of Palestinian refugees to their land and homes, pointing to the inability of the Israeli occupation to achieve its objectives through war and siege. Sheikh Ra'id Salah addressed the crowds in Milano, saying: "Dear brothers and sisters, through your gracious assembly, I call upon the whole world and say: today Gaza's victory and tomorrow the victory of the honorable Jerusalem. Today Gaza's mosques victory, and tomorrow the victory of *al-Aqsa* Mosque."⁵⁵

On 28/5/2009, and in the framework of the activities to commemorate *al-Nakbah* 61st anniversary, the Higher Commemoration Committee in the GS organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice of the dismissed government a popular conference entitled "Witnesses of *al-Nakbah*." During the conference, the minister of Justice Muhammad Faraj al-Ghul stressed on the importance of demanding the right of return for the Palestinian refugees, considering anyone who thinks of waiving it to be "a criminal with respect to the cause" who must be tried before the Palestinian justice. The president of the Higher Commemoration Committee, Husam Ahmad, accused the UN and the great colonialist countries of providing the adequate conditions and cover for Israel in order "to plant it [Israel] in the Arab region," displace the Palestinian people and confiscate their land. He assured also the Palestinian people's adherence to their land.⁵⁶

In the WB, the *al-Nakbah* Commemoration Committee organized public processions to affirm the adherence of the Palestinian people to the right of return. It also gave the names of abandoned Palestinian cities and towns to the streets and squares of the WB.⁵⁷

The Union of Palestinian Communities and Associations in Diaspora organized its first conference in Vienna on 30–31/5/2009, with the participation of representatives of 37 Palestinian communities and 12 organizations. The conference's closing statement affirmed the necessity to end divisions and restore internal unity, reunite institutions on national foundations, and fortify the political system in its two parts: the PLO and the PA. The persons present at the conference asked the PA to refrain from going back to the table of negotiations with Israel unless guarantees are received regarding the ceasing of settlement building, land confiscation and wall building, in addition to removing checkpoints and barriers. They stressed on the adherence to the right of return that was guaranteed by international legitimacy resolutions, the most important of which is resolution 194. They also considered that no security, stability, calm, or peace can be achieved except by the return [of Palestinians to their land].⁵⁸

In the framework of the adherence of the Palestinian refugees to the right of return, nine Palestinian committees that are active in this field issued a statement in Damascus on 27/6/2009 about the establishment of the Palestinian Council for the Right of Return (Mithaq), which is an institutional framework that preserves the right of the Palestinian people to return to the lands from which they were displaced. The charter endorsed by the council members affirmed that historical Palestine was not for partitioning and was the homeland of none other but the Palestinian people. It stressed that the Palestinian refugees are entitled to return to their cities, villages and homes of their fathers and forefathers from where they were expelled in 1948, adding that the Right of Return was not for bargaining, negotiations or referendum considering the surrendering of that right as “high treason.” It said also that there is no legitimacy for any party trying to give up the Right of Return. It added that the state of Palestinian division and the absence of a political leadership for the Palestinian people in light of that rift were threatening the Right of Return.⁵⁹

Conclusion

Approximately 62 years after the 1948 catastrophe, and despite the huge sufferings that ensued from the Israeli occupation, and as a result of displacement and the state of refugees, the Palestinian people are still clinging to their land, strongly aspiring to freedom, return and independence.

Nearly 48.2% of the Palestinian people live inside historical Palestine, and this proportion is increasing in a manner that will lead to a greater number of Palestinians than Jews within five years. This means that after more than 110 years of diligent efforts and international support, the Zionist project has failed to impose its identity on the land or to remove the Palestinian people from it. More than two-thirds of the Palestinian people in the Diaspora still live in Palestine’s neighboring countries, awaiting their return. Their persistence and suffering in the refugee camps offer on a daily basis evidence of their attachment to their land and holy sites.

The Palestinian people are one of the most vivacious and prolific people, as their annual growth rate of 2.9% is considered to be one of the highest rates in the world. Around 42% of the WB and GS inhabitants are aged 15 and below, and this means that the Palestinian people are young.

The Israelis observe the Palestinian demographic growth with more and more concern and caution, and do their utmost in order to set limitations on the Palestinian people and push them to emigrate. They are also busy with their attempts to gain international approval on “the Jewishness of the state of Israel.” Hence, the Palestinian people must persist in their steadfastness and perseverance in their land, and their political leaders, factions, and national forces must refuse to negotiate its blessed land’s identity, regardless of the sacrifices.

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Chapter Eight

*The Economic Situation in the
WB and GS*

The Economic Situation in the WB and GS

Introduction

The Palestinians continue to suffer from the Israeli occupation which is persistent about plundering their wealth and preventing any access to Palestinian human resources. In addition, the Israeli occupation exerts relentless efforts to tie the Palestinian economy to its Israeli counterpart while making the WB and GS a market for the Israeli products.

This chapter casts light on the Palestinian economic situation in the WB and GS during 2009, and it presents a detailed analysis of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), per capita income, the PA's revenues and expenditures in addition to foreign aid. Moreover, the chapter illustrates the contribution of the different industrial and agricultural sectors to the Palestinian economy and it studies the size of the labor force, poverty and unemployment in the WB and GS. To these, the chapter highlights the repercussions of the Israeli siege on GS and the losses resulting from the war on GS to conclude the opportunities to implement the General National Plan 2011–2013.

First: An Overview of the Leading Economic Indicators

1. GDP

The GDP is considered one of the main indicators which reflect the overall economic growth in any country through the comparison of its evolution across two time periods, thus showing the overall performance of national economy. Tracking the GDP of the WB and GS shows an increase from \$4,820.9 million in 2008 to \$5,147.2 million in 2009, i.e., an increase by \$326.3 million and a 6.8% annual growth rate. From 1999 till 2009, the GDP has undergone sharp fluctuations which could be divided into four phases as shown in table 1/8. These phases are:

- a. The downward trend during 1999–2002:** This period witnessed a yearly decline in the economic growth due to the Israeli strict measures and practices. Thus, the decline continued for three consecutive years.
- b. The upward trend which witnessed an improvement in the GDP during 2003–2005:** This improvement was due to local and international efforts made to alleviate the suffering and provide an appropriate economic environment.
- c. The downward trend in 2006:** This decline was the result of the economic siege imposed on the WB and GS and which led to a decline in the GDP by 5.2% in 2006 as compared to 2005.
- d. The return of the growth once again during 2007–2009:** During this period, there was a relative improvement despite the losses in the Palestinian economy which resulted from the Israeli war on GS. The main reason which led to this improvement was the aid and support funds provided by donor countries which covered much of the general budget deficit and enabled the PA to cover much of its expenses including wages, salaries, transfer and operational spending, development expenditures, etc. It is worth of mention here that the economic growth in the WB is way higher than that in the GS.

Table 1/8: GDP in WB and GS 1999–2009 at Constant Prices* (\$ million)¹

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007**	2008**	2009***
GDP	4,511.7	4,118.5	3,765.2	3,264.1	3,749.6	4,198.4	4,559.5	4,322.3	4,554.1	4,820.9	5,147.2
Average annual growth or deterioration %	8.8	-8.7	-8.6	-13.3	14.9	12	8.6	-5.2	5.4	5.9	6.8

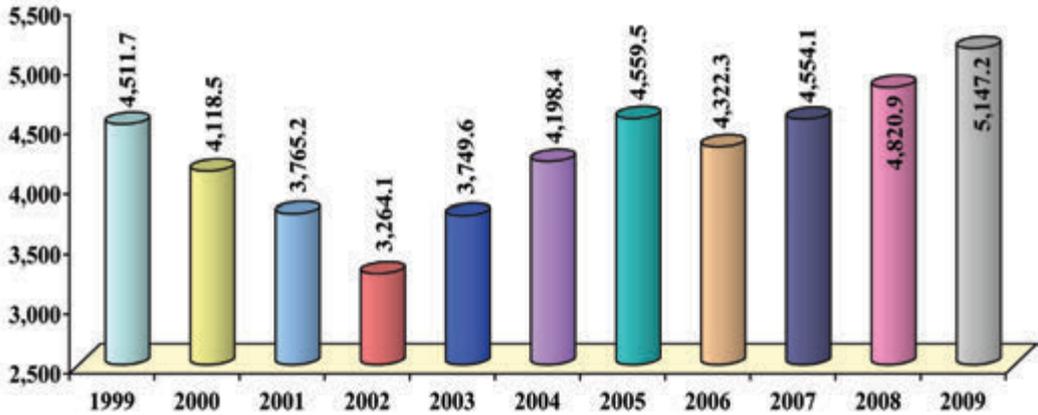
Note: Excluding that part of Jerusalem, which was annexed after the 1967 occupation by Israel.

* Base year for the period 1994–2003 is 1997 and for 2004–2009 is 2004, and this should apply to all tables.

** First revision.

*** Flash estimates.

GDP in WB and GS 1999–2009 (\$ million)

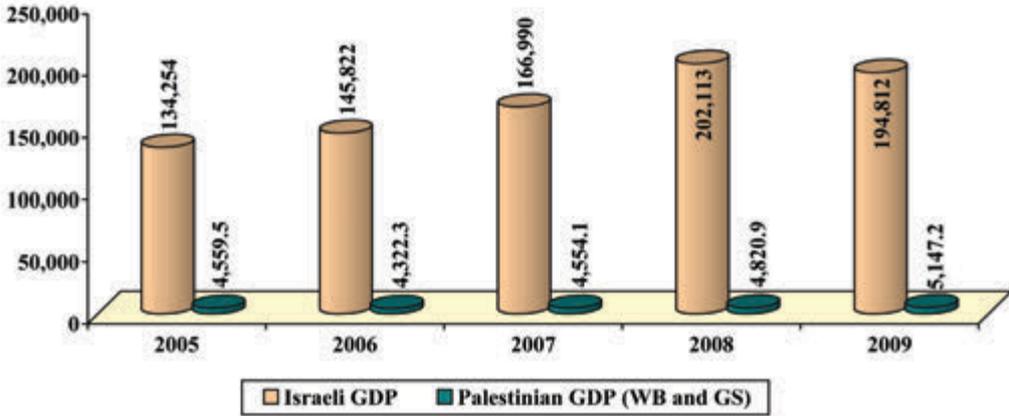


On the other hand, when observing the Israeli GDP which amounted to \$202,113 million in 2008 and \$194,812 million in 2009, we notice that this product is forty-fold its Palestinian counterpart (around 4,000%). This is a clear indication of the hideous impact of the Israeli occupation on the Palestinian economy, the extent of the Israeli exploitation of the Palestinian resources and how much the Israelis are preventing the Palestinians from using their potentials freely and efficiently.

Table 2/8: Comparing the Israeli GDP to the Palestinian GDP 2005–2009 (\$ million)²

Year	Israeli GDP	Palestinian GDP (WB and GS)
2005	134,254	4,559.5
2006	145,822	4,322.3
2007	166,990	4,554.1
2008	202,113	4,820.9
2009	194,812	5,147.2

Comparing the Israeli GDP to the Palestinian GDP 2005–2009 (\$ million)



2. The GDP per Capita 1999–2009

This indicator illustrates the GDP per capita, thus it reflects the average income earned by the individual. The annual increase in the GDP leads to an increase in the individual's income and boosts his ability to meet his need for goods and services, both necessities and luxuries and vice versa. However, it should be noted here that this indicator remains an estimated figure which does not necessarily reflect the equitable distribution of national income since there are around 170 thousand Palestinian families living under poverty line.³ Nonetheless, the GDP remains one of the key indicators used in economic analysis due to its efficiency in tracing growth and comparing one country to another.

When observing the GDP in the WB and GS, the available data show that the GDP per capita was \$1,612 in 1999 then it declined and fluctuated in the following years without retaining its previous value.

In 2009, the GDP per capita was \$1,390 as compared to \$1,290 in 2008, with a 7.8% increase as illustrated in table 3/8. This growth, although a sign of positive development, has been simultaneous with continuous foreign aid and a high level of unemployment; hence, it does not necessarily indicate a substantial growth.

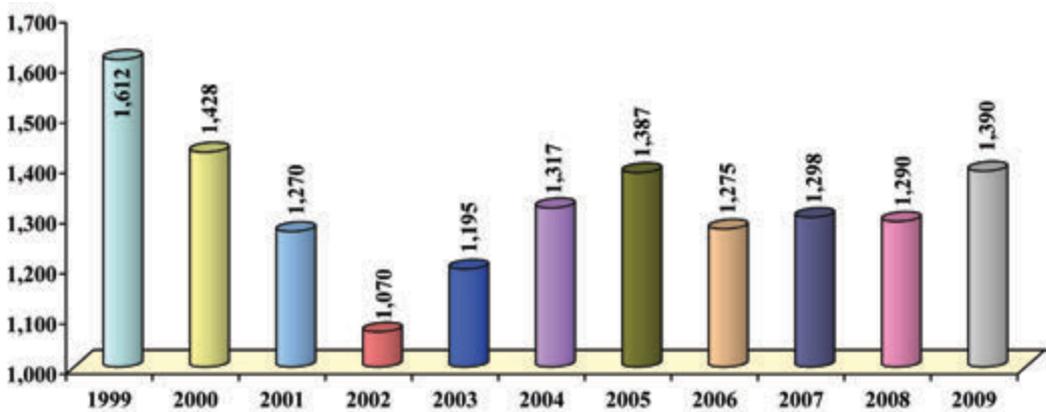
**Table 3/8: GDP per Capita in WB and GS 1999–2009
at Constant Prices (\$)⁴**

Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009*
Annual estimate	1,612	1,428	1,270	1,070	1,195	1,317	1,387	1,275	1,298	1,290	1,390

Note: The figures are based on the statistics of the PCBS excluding that part of Jerusalem, which was annexed after the 1967 occupation by Israel.

* Flash estimates.

GDP per Capita in WB and GS 1999–2009 (\$)

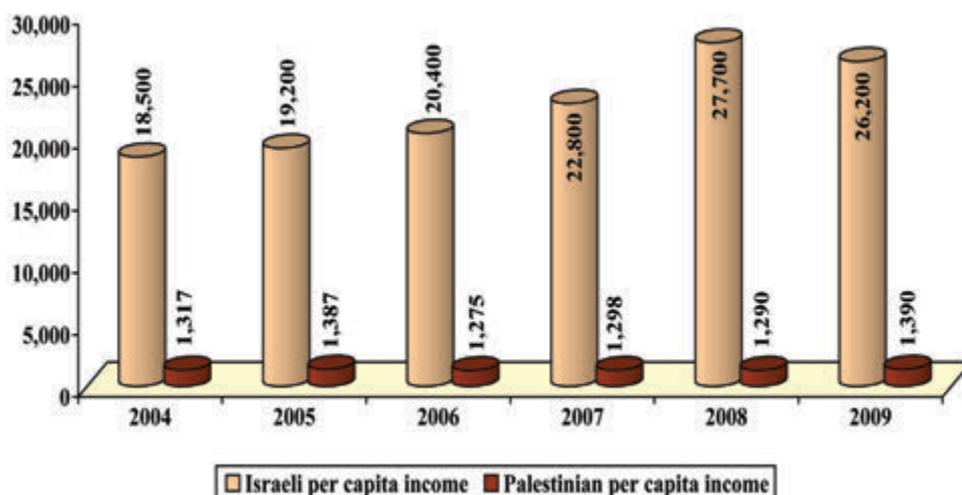


If we consider the Israeli GDP per capita which amounted to \$27,700 in 2008 and \$26,200 in 2009, we clearly notice how the Israeli individual enjoys a better level of living at the expense of the suffering and pain of the Palestinian individual. In 2008, the Israeli GDP per capita was twenty three-fold the Palestinian one and nineteen-fold in 2009. If we take into consideration that the Palestinian individual is not short of human resources and personal capabilities, we could pin down the Israeli role in weakening the Palestinian development opportunities, as well as the improvement of the Palestinian individual’s living standards.

**Table 4/8: Comparison of the Israeli and Palestinian GDP per Capita
2004–2009 (\$)⁵**

Year	Israeli per capita income	Palestinian per capita income (WB and GS)
2004	18,500	1,317
2005	19,200	1,387
2006	20,400	1,275
2007	22,800	1,298
2008	27,700	1,290
2009	26,200	1,390

Comparison of the Israeli and Palestinian GDP per Capita 2004–2009 (\$)



3. Consumption, Saving and Investment Indicators

These indicators enjoy special importance as they outline the relation with the achieved income and the aspects of disposition of this income in the mentioned areas. Thus, the total consumption indicates the part of expenditure used to acquire goods and services in a specific year, while the remaining part represents the savings which could be considered a postponed consumption used when needed. This allows the banking system to compile these savings and prepare them for investors who need money to fund projects to be established, increase the production capacity of existing projects or maintain the level of this capacity without any decline during maintenance operations.

The special case of these indicators in Palestine has different connotations, since the size of total consumption is much higher than the GDP which makes the savings indicator negative and the investment levels low (see table 5/8).

Table 5/8: Percentage of Total Consumption, Total Investment and Domestic Savings of the GDP 2000–2009⁶

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009*
Total consumption (%)	125.7	136.6	140.9	138.9	142.2	143.1	143	139.9	139.4	138.9
Total investment (%)	31.4	20.7	24.7	26.8	25.1	24.1	20.7	17.8	19.1	23.4
Domestic savings (%)	-25.8	-36.6	-40.9	-38.9	-42.2	-43.1	-43	-39.9	-39.4	-38.9

* The figures of 2009 are estimated numbers representing average of the recent nine years.

Percentage of Total Consumption and Total Investment of the GDP 2000–2009 (%)

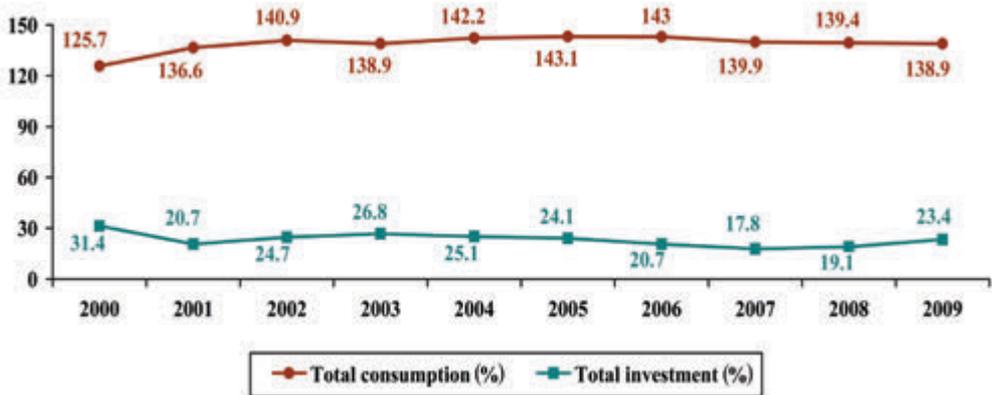


Table 5/8 shows that the total consumption exceeded the GDP and stood at 125.7% in 2000, then it took an upward, fluctuating trend till it reached 138.9% in 2009. This could be referred to the low incomes in Palestine and the steady gains in prices which cause the population to compensate for the lack in their real income by spending their entire income, let alone the consumption which has exceeded the current income levels thus eliminating any ability to save. Given this increase in consumption, the percentage of saving reached around -38.9% in 2009 as shown in table 5/8.

On the other hand, total investment reached low levels with a decreasing trend where the ratio of total investment to GDP decreased from 31.4% in 2000 to 23.4% in 2009. This is due to the absence of favorable investment climate with a negative impact on production and growth.

Since the size of total consumption is high and unusual in the WB and GS, and that is due to the dramatic rise in prices and the dependence on costly Israeli commodities, it is possible to say that all this was at the expense of the domestic savings. Thus the size of savings not only deteriorated but also reached negative levels, especially with the tendency of many consumers to withdraw their savings and deposits, or to borrow money or use aid and external funding to meet their consumption needs.

4. Public Debt

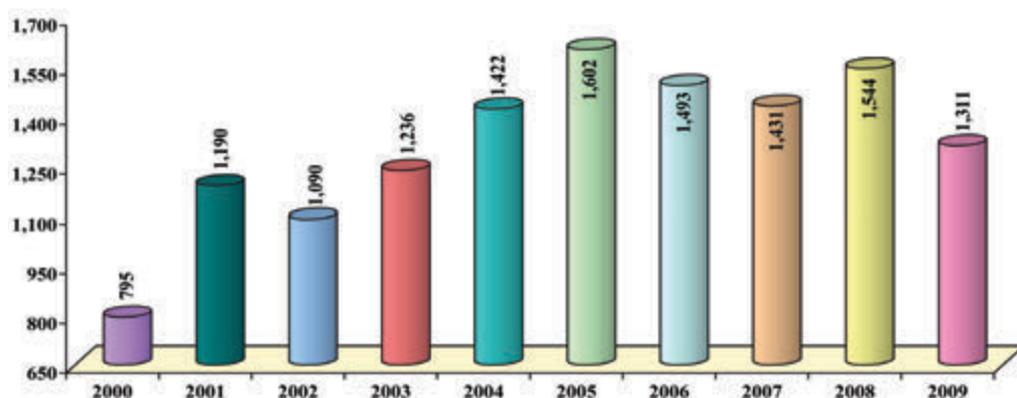
Public debt constitutes an obligation which governments have to meet and pay including the debt installments and their interest. It is not uncommon for countries to resort to borrowing money to finance development projects or to pay off the deficit in their general budget. Nonetheless, the delay in fulfilling these obligations increases burdens on the government and the citizens as well. Faced by increasing burdens, the PA had to resort to borrowing while its debt rose year after year as demonstrated in table 6/8. This debt comes from different sources which include internal loans from domestic banks or the General Authority for Insurance and Pensions, the General Petroleum Corporation (GPC) and the private sector. The sources of debt could also be external whether from governments or international organizations such as the International Development Association (IDA).

The figures in table 6/8 show that the growth of public debt was high until 2008 where it increased from \$795 million to \$1,544 million in the period 2000–2008, by an annual growth rate 8.65% and 94.2% increase in the same period. Although the public debt decreased in 2009, it remained a high one where the share of the individual in the WB and GS was estimated at around \$327, knowing that there was no increase in economic growth or in the size of goods and services exports compared to the size of public debt. The percentage of public debt as compared to the GDP is still a high one estimated at around 26.8% in 2009. Similarly, the percentage of this debt as compared to the total exports is also high where it reached 230%, i.e., 2.3 times the size of exports of goods and services. This entailed more burdens on the PA which faces difficulties to meet its obligations in spite of donations and foreign aid.

Table 6/8: Public Debt of the PA 2000–2009 (\$ million)⁷

Year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Public debt	795	1,190	1,090	1,236	1,422	1,602	1,493	1,431	1,544	1,311*
Its percentage of GDP (%)	17.9	31.8	34.5	34.1	34.9	35.8	32.3	27.5	23.8	26.8
Its percentage of goods and services exports (%)	91.7	212.4	234.3	265.7	265.7	272.5	279	267.1	181.7	230

* Public debt of 2009 is an estimated number representing average of the recent nine years.

Public Debt of the PA 2000–2009 (\$ million)

Second: PA's Fiscal Budget

1. Developments in the Fiscal Operations

The PA depends on three sources to finance its expenditure, the most important of which is the external financing such as grants and foreign aid which constitute 50–55% of budgetary support. The second important source is the clearance revenues (collected by Israel on behalf of the PA), and lastly the domestic revenue source which ranks third in importance.

Thanks to grants and foreign aid, the PA budget could achieve a fiscal surplus which amounted to \$269.8 million in 2008, yet the Palestinian government has faced many difficulties since the beginning of 2009 in providing the necessary

liquidity to meet its obligations. This situation urged the government to resort to borrowing from local banks where loans reached \$530 million in June 2009.⁸ The financial crisis persisted due to the irregular flow of foreign aid caused by the political situation and developments on the Palestinian arena.

2. Developments in the Financial Performance in 2009

a. Revenues

According to table 7/8, the amount of domestic revenues actually received in 2009 was around \$585 million; thus, the size of domestic revenues was less 6.4% compared to its size in the budget, and 22.9% less than what was collected in 2008. This was caused by the decline in non-tax revenues by 19.7% as compared to what has been allocated in the budget, and the increase in tax revenues by 10.4% only as compared to the amount allocated in the budget (see table 7/8).

Considering clearance revenue which reached \$1,137 million in 2008, the number dropped to \$1,090 million in 2009, around a 2.9% decline as compared to the budget allocation. While in comparison to the clearance revenue in 2008, the decline is estimated at 4.1% approximately. Based on this analysis, we find that the total net revenues (gross domestic revenue plus clearance revenue after deducting tax revenue) has declined in 2009 by 5% in comparison to budget allocation and by 13% compared to 2008 thus amounting to \$1,548.7 million. The following figure shows the evolution of gross domestic, clearance and total revenues in the quarters of 2009.

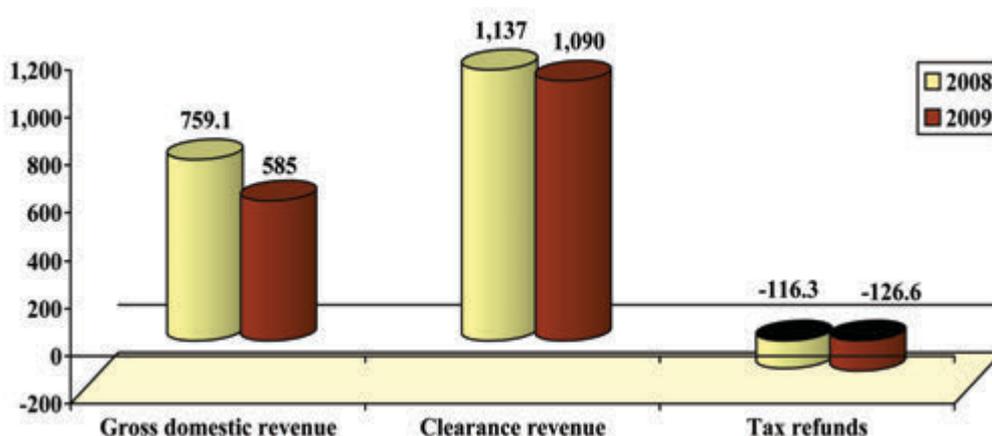
The external budgetary support and development financing which the donor countries have promised to the PA have deteriorated since the end of 2008. Thus, in the first half of 2009, the PA was in a financial crisis which caused it to intensify efforts to urge Arab and international donors to meet their obligations. The USA was prompted to pay \$198.5 million to support the Palestinian budget in July 2009 and the KSA a sum of \$202.8 million in August 2009, i.e., the third quarter of 2009. Here, we notice that the third quarter witnessed a large increase in external budgetary support and development financing as compared to the second and fourth quarters where it reached \$668.7 million, in attempt to save the PA from its crisis. The total external budgetary support and development financing amounted to \$1,414.7 million of the balance specified in the budget, i.e., \$1,953 million. Hence the sum of external budgetary support and development financing for 2009 was 27.6% lower than the budget allocation. This figure declined by 19.7% compared to the 2008 budget.

Table 7/8: Public Revenues and Financing Sources (Cash Basis) 2008–2009
(\$ million)⁹

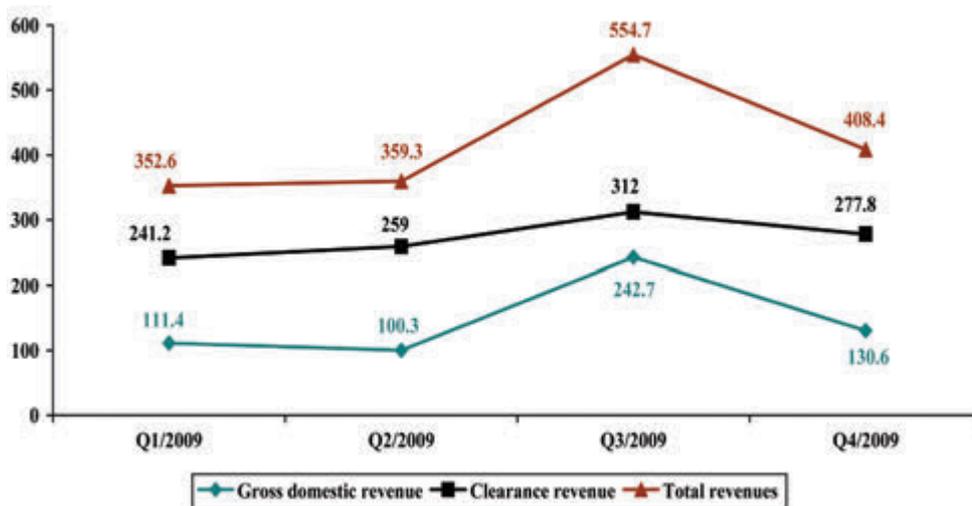
Fiscal operations	Budget 2008 (actual)	Budget 2009	Quarters (Q) of 2009 (actual)				Sum of quarters	Change according to budget 2009 (%)	Change according to budget 2008 (%)
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4			
Gross domestic revenue	759.1*	625	111.4	100.3	242.7	130.6	585	-6.4	-22.9
- Tax revenue	272.8	273	71.2	60.8	84.1	85.4	301.5	10.4	10.5
- Non-tax revenues	486.2*	353	40.2	39.6	158.6	45.2	283.6	-19.7	-41.7
Clearance revenue	1,137	1,123	241.2	259	312	277.8	1,090	-2.9	-4.1
Total revenues	1,896.1	1,748	352.6	359.3	554.7	408.4	1,675	-4.2	-11.7
Tax refunds (-)	-116.3	-118	-10.5	-4.1	-100.9	-11.1	-126.6	7.3	8.9
Total net revenues	1,779.8*	1,630	342.1	355.3	453.9	397.4	1,548.7	-5	-13
External budgetary support and development financing	1,762.7	1,953	272	179.9	668.7	294.1	1,414.7	-27.6	-19.7
The sum of total revenues, external budgetary support and development financing excluding deducting tax refunds	3,658.8	3,701	624.6	539.2	1,223.4	702.5	3,089.7	-16.5	-15.6

* Non tax revenue and gross domestic revenue in 2008 includes \$197.1 million received as dividend from the Palestinian Investment Fund (PIF) to repay the PA's debt to the PIF which is included under net domestic bank financing.

PA Revenues 2008–2009 (\$ million)



The Development of Gross Domestic, Clearance and Total Revenues in the Quarters of 2009 (\$ million)



b. Expenditures

The wage expenditure is considered the main expenditure provision in the budget where it constituted around 54.1% of total expenditure and net lending for 2008. When observing table 8/8, the available data show that what has

actually been spent as wage expenditure in 2009 amounted to \$1,423.2 million, thus exceeding the amount allocated in the budget by 0.9%, although it declined by \$347 million and 19.6% as compared to what has been spent in 2008. This refers to many reasons, notably that the wage expenditure in 2008 have included deferred cash payments that have not been disbursed in timely manner which made the expenditure of 2009 relatively high. On the other hand, public wage expenditure for 2009 was accompanied by a reform policy to reduce bloated public expenditures by limiting the new governmental appointments, cash allowances and promotions. This happened while encouraging early retirement to benefit from its advantages and facilitations, in addition to the suspension of payment of salaries to those who work within the context of conditions related to Palestinian division.

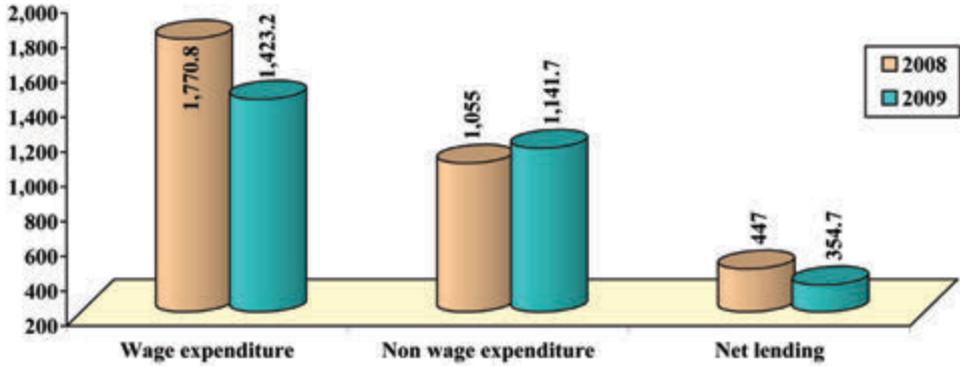
Table 8/8: Total and Development Expenditures (Cash Basis) 2008–2009

(\$ million)¹⁰

Fiscal operations	Budget 2008 (actual)	Budget 2009	Quarters (Q) of 2009 (actual)				Sum of quarters	Change according to budget 2009 (%)	Change according to budget 2008 (%)
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4			
Wage expenditure	1,770.8	1,410	321.3	341.1	509	251.8	1,423.2	0.9	-19.6
Non wage expenditure	1,055	1,290	328.2	221.6	327.9	264	1,141.7	-11.5	8.2
Net lending	447	380	76.5	81.7	115.3	81.2	354.7	-6.7	-20.6
Total expenditure and net lending	3,272.7	3,080	726	644.3	952.2	597	2,919.5	-5.2	-10.8
Development expenditures	(...)	503	8.7	61.8	56.8	58.6	185.9	-63	(...)

Note: (...) means there is no available data.

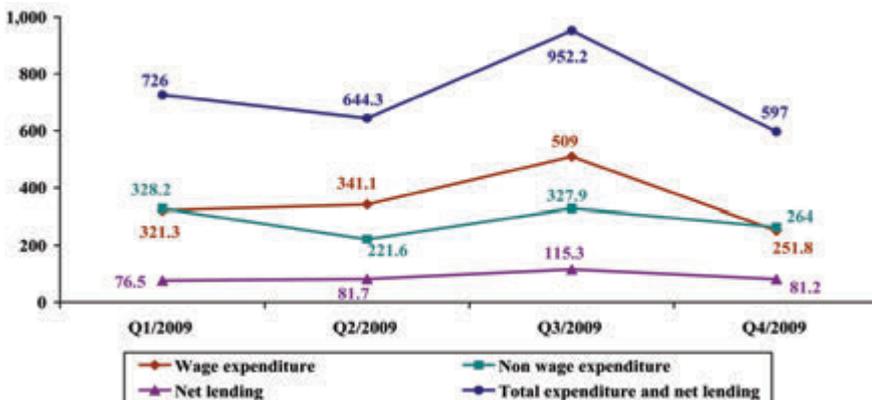
PA Expenditures 2008–2009 (\$ million)



The non-wage expenditures which include transfers, operating and capital expenditures, accounted for 32.2% of total expenditure and net lending in 2008, and in the 2009 budget they were allocated a sum of \$990 million, which increased to \$1,290 million after a cabinet decision, on 29/9/2009, which added \$300 million to this provision. What was actually spent in 2009 amounted to \$1,141.7 million; thus the value of real expenditure dropped \$148.3 million and by 11.5% compared to what was appropriated in the budget. Comparing this expenditure to the budget of 2008, we notice that it is higher by \$86.7 million, i.e., by 8.2%.

Regarding the net lending provision, the 2009 budget allocated around \$380 million for this provision which is \$67 million less than that in the 2008 budget. Net lending accounted for \$354.7 million in 2009, i.e., \$25.3 million and 6.7% less than the budget, while if compared to the 2008 budget it is 20.6% less. The following figure illustrates the evolution of expenditure in the quarters of 2009.

The Development of PA’s Expenditures in the Quarters of 2009 (\$ million)



As for the development expenditure related to projects, a sum of \$503 million was allocated in the budget where \$8.7 million were spent in the first quarter of 2009 then \$61.8 million in the second, \$56.8 million in the third and \$58.6 million in the last quarter of the same year. Hence, the actual development expenditures in 2009 reached \$185.9 million, i.e., 37% of the sum appropriated in the budget. The reason of this decline which is estimated at 63% is that the priority is to support wages and salaries and similar expenditures, while operating expenditure comes next. It is worth of mention here that commitment to spending on development projects remains subject to available surpluses and aid.

c. Budget Deficit

Budget deficit in 2008 amounted to \$1,492.9 million after deduction of total expenditure from total net revenues. According to the 2009 budget, the deficit was expected to drop to \$1,450 million. Yet with the decrease in the collected revenues and the delay in foreign aid in the first and second quarters of 2009, and despite the efforts to cut costs, the deficit in 2009 reached \$1,370.9 million, 5.5% less than the sum appropriated in the budget and 8.2% decrease as compared to the 2008 budget (see table 9/8).

The deficit after adding development expenditure for 2009 amounted to around \$1,556.8 million, a decrease equivalent to 20.3% compared to the sum expected in the budget. This is due to the significant depreciation in the development expenditure. On the other hand, when external budgetary support and development financing are added to total net revenues, total deficit including development expenditure in the end of 2009 reached \$142.1 million while the estimated budget expected that the sum of total net revenues, including external budgetary support and development financing, be equal to total expenditure including development expenditure and the deficit would be reduced to none. To face this situation, the PA has resorted to borrowing from Palestinian local banks to cover the deficit, and by the end of the year it had a surplus of \$33.8 million (see table 9/8).

Table 9/8: The Development of the Actual Budget Balance for 2009 and Comparing It to the Estimate Budget (Cash Basis) 2008–2009 (\$ million)¹¹

Fiscal operations	Budget 2008 (actual)	Budget 2009	Quarters (Q) of 2009 (actual)				Sum of quarters	Change according to budget 2009 (%)	Change according to budget 2008 (%)
			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4			
Budget deficit before external budgetary support (excluding development expenditure)	-1,492.9	-1,450	-383.9	-289.1	-498.3	-199.6	-1,370.9	-5.5	-8.2
Budget deficit including development expenditure (before external budgetary support)*	(...)	-1,953	-392.6	-350.8	-555.2	-258.2	-1,556.8	-20.3	(...)
Budget deficit including development expenditure (after external budgetary support and development financing)**	(...)	0	-120.6	-170.9	113.5	35.9	-142.1	∞	(...)
Net Domestic Bank Financing			90.6	225.3	-175.6	35.5	175.8		
Residual			-30	54.4	-62	71.4	33.8		

Note: ∞ means infinity and is equal to the sum of the four quarters of 2009 divided by the 2009 budget which was zero.

* Budget deficit including development expenditure before external budgetary support: total net revenues - (total expenditure + development expenditure).

** Budget deficit including development expenditure after external budgetary support and development financing (total net revenues + external budgetary support - total expenditure).

According to the draft budget of 2010, which is estimated at about \$3.8 billion, the deficit is expected to reach around \$1,211 million, i.e., 16% of the GDP, which is the lowest level since 2000. In addition, the public budget for 2010 expects a 20% growth in the gross domestic revenues so that they exceed \$2 billion, which is the highest level attained since the establishment of the PA 17 years ago.¹²

Third: Work and Unemployment

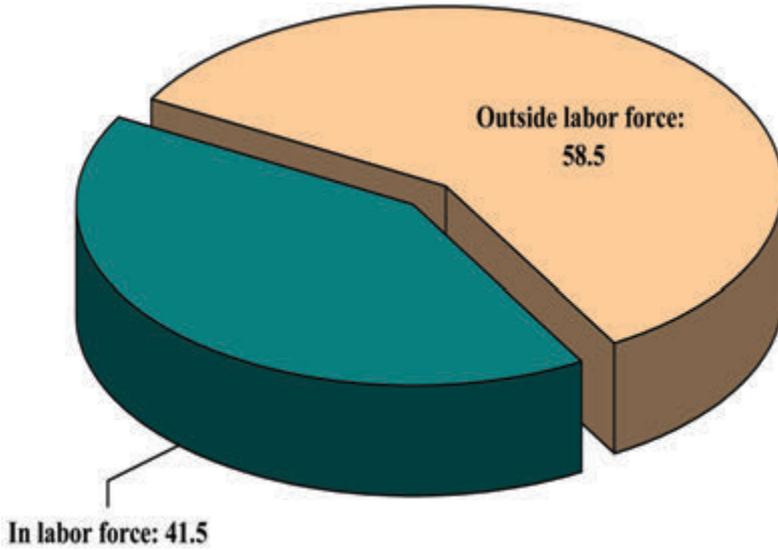
1. Palestinian Labor Force and the Rate of Participation and Unemployment

The WB and GS have been suffering from siege since more than two years. It suffers the closure of the crossings, the political, social and economic division between WB and GS and the seclusion of GS. This resulted in a decline in the size of trade, the deterioration of living standards, besides poverty and high level of unemployment.

Table 10/8: Distribution of Persons Aged 15 Years and Over in the WB and GS by Labor Force Status and Sex¹³

Labor force status	Q4/2008		Q1/2009		Q2/2009		Q3/2009		Q4/2009	
	Number	%								
In labor force	896,100	41.4	934,000	41.4	949,800	41.7	955,400	41.6	963,500	41.5
Males	735,600	67.3	761,900	66.9	767,200	66.7	780,600	67.2	790,000	67.3
Females	160,500	15	172,100	15.4	182,600	16.2	174,800	15.4	173,500	15.1
Outside labor force	1,268,600	58.6	1,321,100	58.6	1,327,000	58.3	1,343,200	58.4	1,357,200	58.5
Males	357,400	32.7	377,800	33.1	383,500	33.3	381,300	32.8	383,200	32.7
Females	911,200	85	943,300	84.6	943,500	83.8	961,900	84.6	974,000	84.9
Total	2,164,700	100	2,255,100	100	2,276,800	100	2,298,600	100	2,320,700	100

Distribution of Persons Aged 15 Years and Over in the WB and GS by Labor Force Status at the End of 2009 (%)



Distribution of Persons Aged 15 Years and Over in the WB and GS by Labor Force Status and Sex at the End of 2009 (%)

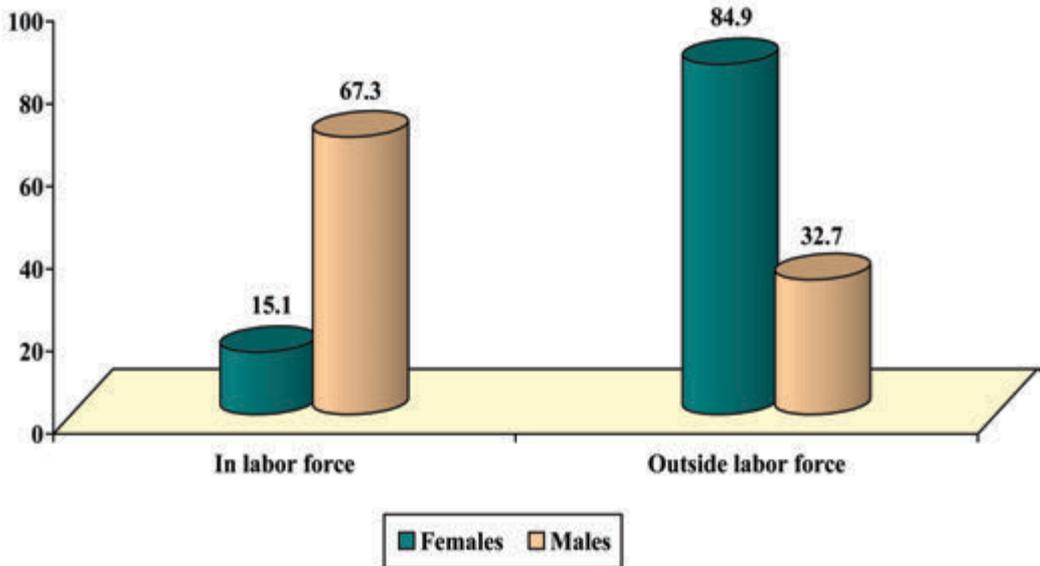


Table 10/8 shows that the total labor force in WB and GS in 2008 rose from 896 thousand in the fourth quarter of 2008, by 41.4% of the 2,164,700 Palestinians aged 15 and over, to around 964 thousand in the fourth quarter of 2009, i.e., by 41.5% of the Palestinians over 15, numbering 2,320,700 individuals.

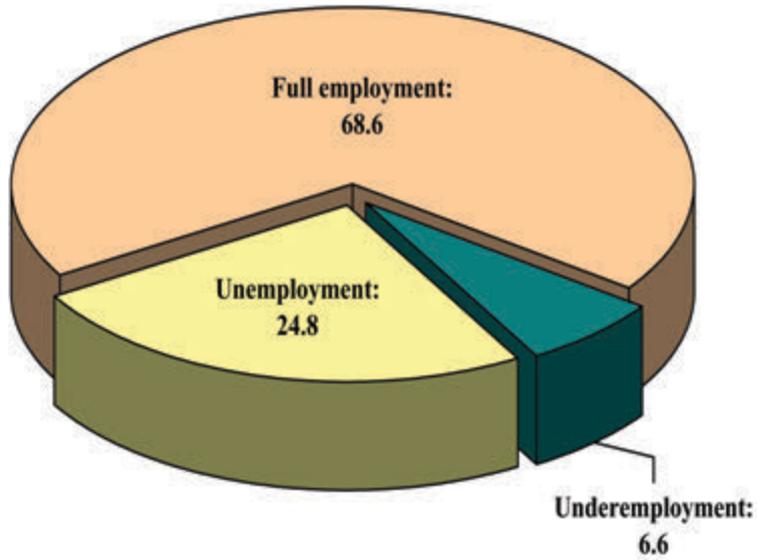
The number of males within the labor force increased from 736 thousand in the fourth quarter of 2008 to 790 thousand in the fourth quarter of 2009, yet it maintained the same ratio, i.e., 67.3% of total males aged 15 and over. The same thing applies for females within labor force where their number increased from around 161 thousand in the in the fourth quarter of 2008, i.e., by 15%, to around 174 thousand in the fourth quarter of 2009, which accounts for 15.1%.

Upon comparing the percentage of participants in labor force in 2008–2009, we notice an increase from 41.3% to 41.6% respectively and from 875 thousand to around 946 thousand (see table 13/8).

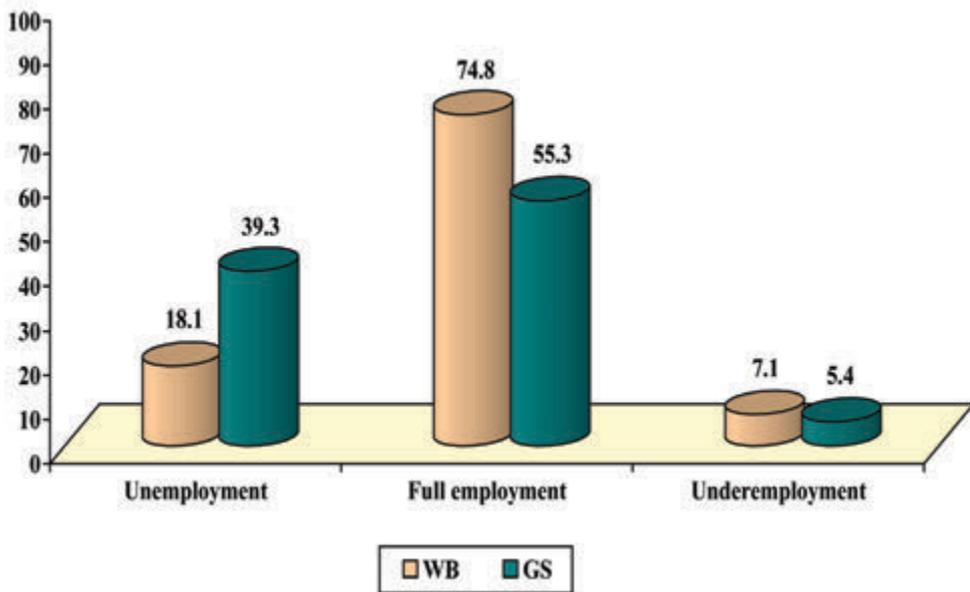
Table 11/8: Distribution of Labor Force Participants Aged 15 Years and Over in the WB and GS¹⁴

Labor force components	Q4/2008		Q1/2009		Q2/2009		Q3/2009		Q4/2009	
	Number	%								
Unemployment	250,400	27.9	236,900	25.4	211,100	22.2	246,200	25.8	239,300	24.8
WB	119,600	19.8	120,800	19.5	103,200	15.9	114,900	17.8	119,000	18.1
GS	130,800	44.8	116,100	37	107,900	36	131,300	42.3	120,300	39.3
Full employment	588,400	65.7	641,800	68.7	680,400	71.6	660,400	69.1	660,800	68.6
WB	447,600	74.1	461,700	74.4	507,000	78	495,500	76.9	491,200	74.8
GS	140,800	48.2	180,100	57.5	173,400	57.7	164,900	53.1	169,600	55.3
Underemployment	57,300	6.4	55,300	5.9	58,300	6.2	48,800	5.1	63,400	6.6
WB	36,800	6.1	37,900	6.1	39,400	6.1	34,400	5.3	46,700	7.1
GS	20,500	7	17,400	5.5	18,900	6.3	14,400	4.6	16,700	5.4
Total	896,100	100	934,000	100	949,800	100	955,400	100	963,500	100

Distribution of Labor Force Participants Aged 15 Years and Over in the WB and GS at the End of 2009 (%)



Labor Force Participants Aged 15 Years and Over in the WB and GS at the End of 2009 (%)



Regarding unemployment, the percentage of unemployed individuals looking for a job in WB and GS dropped from 27.9% in the fourth quarter of 2008 to 24.8% in the fourth quarter of 2009, which means an improvement in the operational level. The decline was notable in GS where it dropped from 44.8% in the fourth quarter of 2008 to 39.3% in the fourth quarter of 2009.

As per the labor force surveys conducted by the PCBS, Hebron recorded the highest unemployment rate in WB in 2009 by 23.6%, while in GS Khan Yunus occupied the first rank by 50.4%.¹⁵

Table 12/8: Unemployment Percentage Rate of Participants in the Labor Force Aged 15 Years and Over in the WB and GS by Age Group (%)¹⁶

Age group	Q4/2008	Q1/2009	Q2/2009	Q3/2009	Q4/2009
15–19	43	39.4	28.7	39	38.2
20–24	41.1	39	38.6	41.8	40.4
25–29	30.1	28.8	27.6	33.2	29.1
30–34	22.7	20.6	17.9	19.9	19.4
35–39	22.3	19.5	13.7	16.8	17.1
40–44	21.7	19.5	15.8	16.8	16.3
45–49	19	16.4	14.1	16.9	17.9
50+	20.1	16.7	13.7	14.2	15.9

Unemployment Percentage Rate of Participants in the Labor Force Aged 15 Years and Over by Age Group (%)

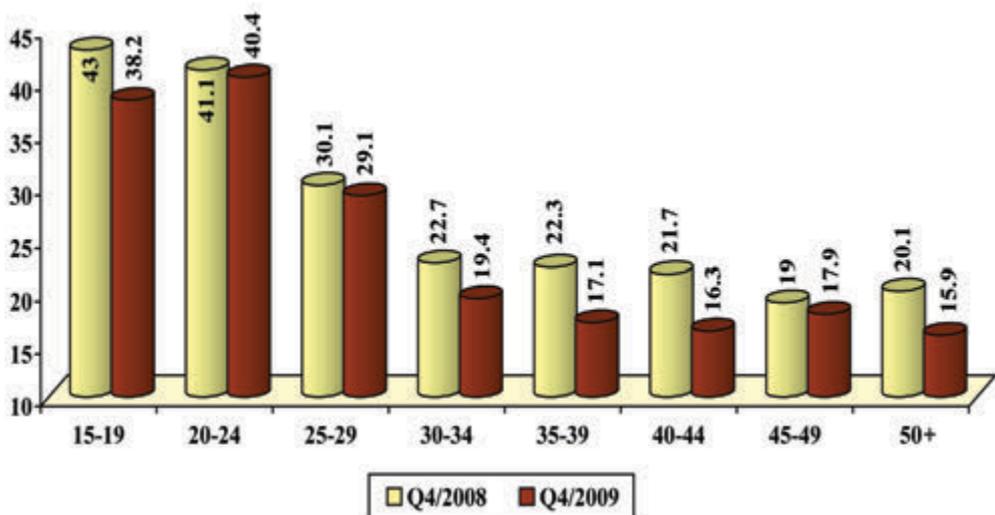
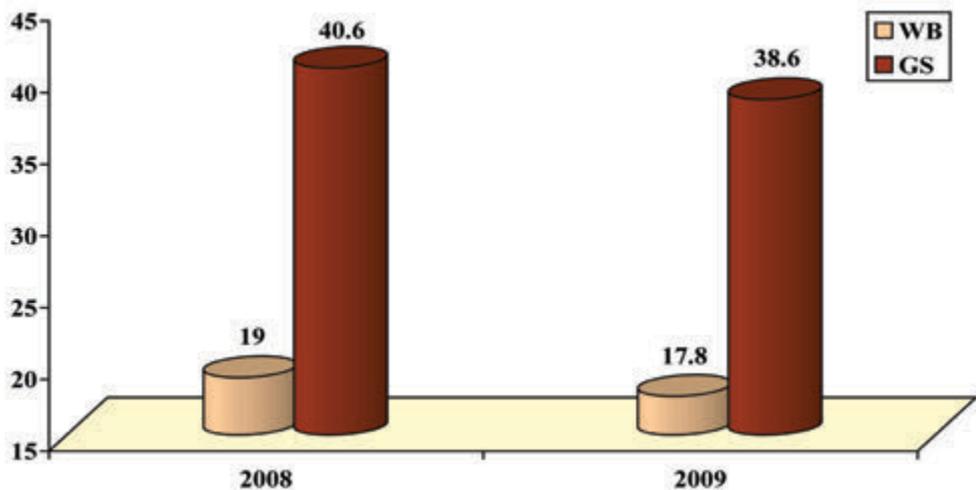


Table 12/8 shows that unemployment rate is higher among youths from 15 to 29 years. On the other hand, the youth category 15–19 years recorded the highest unemployment level in the fourth quarter of 2009, then age category 20–24 years which reached 41.1% in the fourth quarter of 2008 and 40.4% in the fourth quarter of 2009.

Table 13/8: General Framework of the Palestinian Labor Force in WB and GS 2008–2009¹⁷

Year	2008		2009	
	Number	%	Number	%
Labor force participation (15 yrs & over)	975,000	41.3	946,400	41.6
The unemployed among the labor force participants	227,000	26	231,400	24.5
- WB	112,000	19	112,967	17.8
- GS	115,000	40.6	118,433	38.6

General Framework of the Palestinian Labor Force in WB and GS 2008–2009 (%)



Observing table 13/8 where the level of unemployment reached 24.5% in 2009, and upon comparing the levels of unemployment in the WB and GS in 2008 and 2009, we notice that the level of unemployment dropped from 26% in 2008 to 24.5% in 2009, which is a low level counting 4,400 persons. The level of

unemployment was divided between the WB and GS where it reached 17.8% in WB in 2009 compared to 38.6% in GS, whereas it reached 19% in 2008 in WB and 40.6% in GS.

Concerning the distribution of workers in the economic sector, surveys indicated the rise of the number of workers in WB and GS between the fourth quarter of 2008 and the first quarter of 2009 by approximately 51 thousand where it reached around 697 thousand workers in the first quarter of 2009 compared to around 646 thousand in the fourth quarter of 2008. In addition, the number of workers in the WB and GS in the second quarter increased by 42 thousand workers where it amounted to around 739 thousand. Observing the surveys of the third quarter of 2009, we notice that the number of workers declined by around 30 thousand to reach approximately 709 thousand; whereas in the fourth quarter of 2009 it reached around 724 thousand workers in WB and GS.

Table 14/8: Distribution of Employed Persons by Economic Activity for the Fourth Quarter of 2008 and the Quarters of 2009¹⁸

Economic Activity	Q4/2008		Q1/2009		Q2/2009		Q3/2009		Q4/2009	
	Number	%								
Agriculture, fishing and forestry	83,941	13	81,561	11.7	90,860	12.3	75,884	10.7	89,801	12.4
Mining, quarrying and manufacturing	71,673	11.1	87,835	12.6	84,212	11.4	83,686	11.8	91,249	12.6
Construction	69,735	10.8	77,378	11.1	90,860	12.3	86,522	12.2	82,559	11.4
Commerce, restaurants and hotels	129,786	20.1	128,963	18.5	135,182	18.3	141,840	20	142,667	19.7
Transportation, storage and communication	36,159	5.6	39,038	5.6	39,151	5.3	41,843	5.9	43,452	6
Services and other branches	254,406	39.4	282,325	40.5	298,435	40.4	279,425	39.4	274,472	37.9
Total	645,700	100	697,100	100	738,700	100	709,200	100	724,200	100

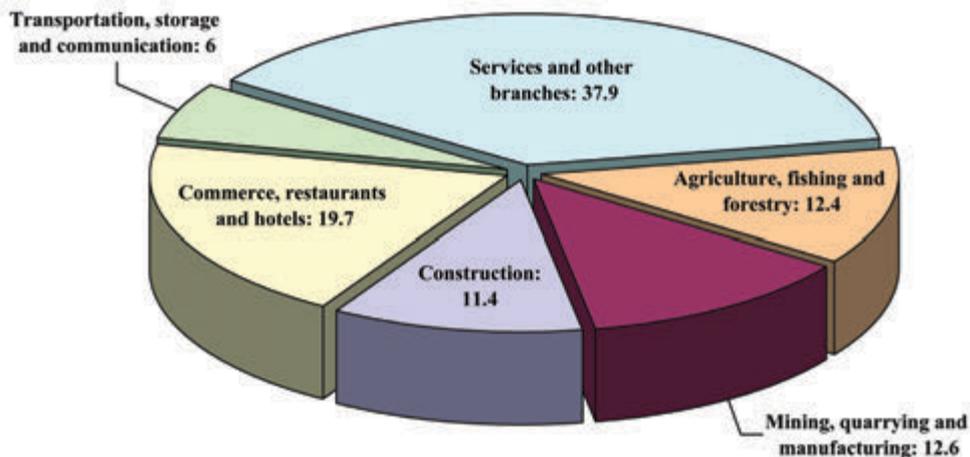
Distribution of Employed Persons by Economic Activity at the End of 2009 (%)

Table 14/8 shows that the services and other branches sector has the highest employment rate in WB and GS, whether in the fourth quarter of 2008 or the quarters of 2009, a rate which ranges between 37.9% and 40.5% followed by commerce, restaurants and hotels sector with employment rate ranging between 20.1% and 18.3% for the fourth quarter of 2008 and quarters of 2009. Mining, quarrying and manufacturing sector comes next in addition to the construction, agriculture, fishing and forestry sectors which employ the same percentage ranging between 10.7% and 13%. Transportation, storage and communication sector comes last with the lowest employment rate ranging between 5.3% and 6%.

2. Poverty

Data issued by the PCBS show that the rate of poverty among Palestinian families reached 34.6% with 23.6% in WB and 56% in GS, while children living in poverty constituted 41.9% with 28.8% in WB and 61.4% in GS. Around 800 thousand children lived in poverty while 33 thousand children practiced child labor in 2007.

On the other hand, the findings of the Palestinian Expenditure and Consumption Survey 2007 revealed that the poverty rate among Palestinian households according to income patterns is 57.3%. The poverty rate for households with children reached 59.3% while for childless households reached 47.2%. The findings also revealed that poor households in the WB reached 47.2% of total households, whereas poor households with children reached 48.6%, and poor childless households reached

41.3%. On the other hand, 76.9% of households in GS were poor, whereas 78.9% of these poor households have children, and 63.7% are childless ones.¹⁹

Poverty rate has witnessed notable increase in GS due to the tightened siege and the Israeli war on the Strip. Mohammad Eshtayyeh, the Minister in charge of the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR), noted on 24/2/2009 that the level of poverty has reached 85% in GS.²⁰ In addition, a report issued by the Arab League in September 2009 mentioned that 80% of the Gazans live under poverty line with an increase in unemployment rates to 60%.²¹ This was confirmed by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report which stated that poverty affects 90% of the population in Gaza.²²

Fourth: Industrial and Agricultural Production

1. Industrial Activity

Table 15/8: GDP by Economic Activity 1999, 2008 and 2009 at Constant Prices (\$ million)²³

Year	1999		2008*		2009**	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Mining and quarrying	35.7	5.5	21.5	3	22.7	3
Manufacturing	566.4	86.4	539.3	75.2	566.9	75.2
Electricity and water supply	53.4	8.1	156.7	21.8	164.7	21.8
Total	655.5	100	717.5	100	754.3	100

Note: Excluding that part of Jerusalem, which was annexed after the 1967 occupation by Israel.

* First revision.

** Flash estimates.

Developed countries owe their achievements to industrial activity which allows a diversity of productions in enormous quantities where productivity increases considerably with the use of machinery and modern technology. Therefore, Industrial activity is considered one of the leading indicators of economic development. Nonetheless, those achievements depend on appropriate economic climate, abundant economic resources and the creativity of leading businessmen

and industrialists. Given the absence of the favorable economic climate due to the siege and tight blockade besides the harsh Israeli practices and the war on GS (27/12/2008–18/1/2009), the Palestinian industrial activity has witnessed a remarkable deterioration during *al-Aqsa Intifadah*; however its contribution to the GDP in 2009 retrieved its level in 1999 where it reached 14.7% in 2009 compared to 14.5% in 1999, noting that during 10 years it did not exceed 15% over the entire period.

Industry includes three main branches: mining, quarrying and manufacturing where each has its own importance in the industrial activity with manufacturing in the forefront. Yet, each of these branches contributes variably to the whole industrial sector due to the disparate trends in the domains of development. On the one hand, water, electricity and gas supplies achieved high growth over 1999–2009 which amounted to 208.4% with a significant increase between 2008 and 2009 by 5.1%. This refers to the importance of this activity for the demand of consumers, which increases every year thus representing the dire need for the consumer and the producer alike. This is contrary to the mining and quarrying sector whose relative importance declined drastically compared to the overall industrial activity from 5.5% to 3% over the aforementioned period of 10 years, where it deteriorated by 36.4%. This is due to the obstacles facing this activity on the levels of export and the need of the local building and construction market. On the other hand, the GDP for the manufacturing industry almost maintained the same level during 1999–2009 ranging between \$566.4 million and \$566.9 million, thus showing that that the Israeli occupation prevents the normal growth of these industries where no genuine growth was recorded during the last 10 years.

2. Agricultural Activity

The agricultural sector in Palestine is of considerable importance as the main source of food, employment and contribution in GDP despite the retreat in its role in the last decades. It contributed by 4.8% in 2009 compared to 5.9% in 2008 and 10.4% in 1999 as shown in table 16/8. The agricultural sector is considered one of the main components of foreign trade, where the percentage of exports of agricultural products reaches around 22% of total exports. These exports pass through four crossings in the WB: al-Jalameh, Taybeh, Beitunia and Tarqumia.²⁴ In GS the agricultural exports are very limited and reached

rock bottom in 2009 while they were confined to flowers and strawberry crops being exported via Kfar Salem crossing to the south of GS at the intersection of the Egyptian, Palestinian and Israeli borders.

Agricultural activity has yielded a product estimated at around \$471 million in 1999 which constituted 10.4% of the GDP as shown in table 16/8, then it deteriorated in a drastic manner in the following years with the fluctuation from one year to another till it reached its lowest level in 2009 scoring \$249 million only, thus representing 52.8% of its value in 1999, i.e., with a deterioration equivalent to 47.2% during 1999–2009.

Table 16/8: The Size of Agricultural Product and Its Contribution to the GDP 1999–2009 at Constant Prices (\$ million)²⁵

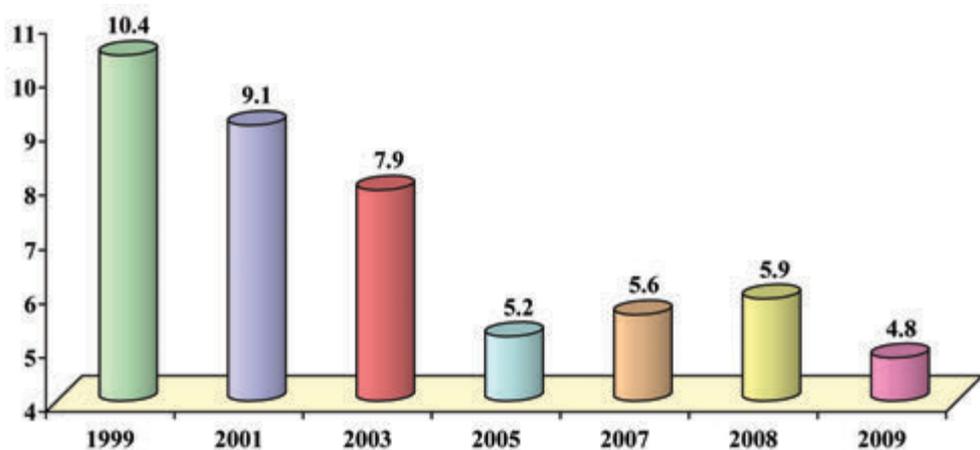
Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008*	2009**
Agriculture and fishing	470.7	403.6	340.8	251.3	297.6	296.7	236.2	240.3	252.2	286.1	248.5
Share of the GDP (%)	10.4	9.8	9.1	7.7	7.9	7.1	5.2	5.6	5.6	5.9	4.8

Note: Excluding that part of Jerusalem, which was annexed after the 1967 occupation by Israel.

* First revision.

** Flash estimates.

Percentage Contribution of Agricultural Production to the GDP, Selected Years (%)



a. Impediments to the Palestinian Agricultural Activity in WB and GS

This activity has been subject to a variety of factors, mainly:

1. The separation wall in the west and east sides of the WB which appropriated large areas of land amounting to more than 18% of fertile lands, thus depriving the Palestinians from investing these lands or benefiting from them, and depriving them from the sources of their livelihood.
2. The increasing number and continuous expansion of settlements in addition to the increasing number of settlers living there at the expense of the Palestinian lands.
3. The continued establishment of military checkpoints at city entrances and exits, thus hindering the movement of crops and livestock products which exposes them to damage and increases their cost. In fact, there are unjustifiable Israeli practices which target the exporters such as having them download their truck loads repeatedly, using dogs to search the products, and specifying a crossing point for them which might need them to cover longer distances despite the possibility to use shorter ones.
4. The hindrances which limit the import and export movement via crossings, bridges and ports and not allowing the Palestinian trucks to reach the Israeli ports where intensive searches are imposed for security reasons, thus delaying the process of export and import.
5. Repeated daily attacks by the settlers on the Palestinian lands and the farmers, including physical assault, looting of the crops, cutting trees and burning them and preventing these farmers from practicing their normal agricultural activity, especially in the harvest seasons. These practices are meant to scare the farmers and urge them to leave the lands fallow and then abandon them, which makes it easier for the settlers to take over these lands.
6. Controlling water resources in the WB and GS where an Amnesty International report issued in October 2009 notes that the Israeli occupation uses a high percentage of water rights of the Palestinians and deprives them of the use of River Jordan.²⁶ Note that the share of the Palestinians in water does not exceed 120 million meter cube per year compared to 700 million held by Israel,²⁷ which reflects the reality of the Israeli control of the Palestinian water and depriving its owners from their rights. In addition, there are impediments hampering the improvement of the quality of the coastal aquifer water in GS which

is contaminated by 90–95% and unfit for human consumption.²⁸ These obstacles include preventing the import of the machinery and equipment necessary to operate sewage plants and drilling new groundwater wells, besides the shortage in spare parts used to replace defective parts.

b. The Impacts of the Israeli Practices on the Agricultural Sector

1. The continued appropriation of large tracts of land in the WB. Based on the announced Israeli plans, the establishment of the two separation walls in the east and west parts of the WB leaves for the Palestinians only 45–50% of the original area of land.
2. A significant decline in employment with a continuous rise in the levels of unemployment. This means a drop in the Palestinian agricultural income, caused by the deterioration in economic situation in WB and GS, and a decline in the economic status of many Palestinian families and pushing them to poverty line.
3. The increased cost of agricultural production, reduction of quality level in addition to the deterioration of competitiveness as compared to Israeli products.
4. The increase in losses and direct damages whether being related to military checkpoints and similar hindrances, or resulting from the war on GS and the continuous siege. The value of losses and direct damages amounted to \$120 million in the WB and \$240 million in GS.
5. The deterioration in food security where estimations expect an increase in the level of its deficit to 25% in the WB and 61% in GS.

c. Lost Opportunities in the Palestinian Agricultural Activity Resulting from Israeli Hindrances

The World Bank estimates a potential increase of the GDP in WB and GS by 10%, i.e., this GDP could increase from \$4,896 million in 2009 to \$5,386 million when the Palestinians get all their water rights. Moreover, the World Bank believes that there is an opportunity to upgrade the Palestinian agricultural activity where the area of cultivated land could be increased from the current 240 thousand donums to 700 thousand, i.e., an increase by 460 thousand donums and 192%. This will pave the way for a notable increase in job opportunities that could reach to 110 thousand new jobs.²⁹

Fifth: Consequences of the Economic Linkage to Israel

There are many faces for the linkage of the Palestinian economy with the Israeli occupation due to its control over natural resources and potentials. It has direct impact on the Palestinian decision-making process. The following are some forms of dependency on Israel:

1. Keeping the WB and GS in a State of Self-Autonomy without Sovereignty

The political status quo limited the power of the Palestinian authorities on the ground, a problem facing the local and foreign investor alike. Investors do not only need the license from the Palestinian authorities to start work but also the approval of the Israeli authorities to import the necessary equipment and expertise from abroad; this means that there is a considerable overlap between politics and economy making it impossible to advance the Palestinian economy before finding a political solution with Israel. Consequently, finding a successful development plan in WB and GS is unlikely without a lasting political solution in the region, which also means the overlap of economic development with the political solution of the Palestinian issue. For this reason, any betting on the possibility of developing a link between the Palestinians and Israel without pursuing a lasting solution is doomed to failure. This was reiterated on the Palestinian official level where Muhammad Mustafa, the senior economic advisor to the Palestinian President, stated that jumping over the political solution which is based on the two-state solution to the concept of economic peace is not feasible without political peace and stability.³⁰ In this context, the report issued by UNCTAD is skeptical about the 2009 announcement of “economic peace” initiative proclaimed by Israel. It added that:

It is important to examine the extent to which these ‘new’ Israeli initiatives differ from, or are a component of, long-standing Israeli policy towards the Palestinian economy. Through a review of 25 years of reporting by UNCTAD, a coherent argument emerges for a bold departure from the conventional international economic policy approach, which has left unchallenged the context, frameworks and policies of occupation. An alternative model recognizing the realities of the Palestinian economy and the evident incompatibility between occupation and development becomes imperative.

The UNCTAD report has clearly emphasized the need to give the Palestinians sovereignty over land, water and borders.³¹

2. Israeli Keeness for the Subordination of the Palestinian Economy

Israel is adamant about keeping the Palestinian economy under its control so that it continues to enjoy the privileges and benefits that come along with this control. For this reason, it picked two tracks at the same time, the first one aims at isolating the Palestinians from the outer world and limiting dealings with it to the narrowest possible point, whereas the second track is represented in making the Palestinian economy directly subordinate to the Israeli economy as an only available choice. The application of this trend began in the wake of the Israeli occupation of Arab lands in 1967, then it was specified and documented in the Oslo Accords signed between Israel and the PLO in 1993 and later in the Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the PLO (Paris Protocol) signed in 1994, thus limiting economic tracks in a way that ties the Palestinian economy to Israel. Accordingly, the Palestinian economy has become heavily dependent on the Israeli economy in many respects.

Currently, the chances are weak for breaking the stalemate and the tightened siege, in addition unemployment and poverty have spread. Thus, the Palestinian economy seems to suffer severe conditions which make finding ways to meet the people's basic needs its highest aspiration. Thus, the subordination of the Palestinian economy to Israel was not the outcome of political agreement only, but also the result of the Israeli occupation. This occupation pursues, through systematic and thorough efforts, to curb the Palestinian economy and weaken it while keeping it dependent on the Israeli economy through a fan of cumbersome and stressful actions.³²

However, there could be some opportunities to break this subordination by moving towards the Arab world through the reactivation of the Greater Arab Free Trade Zone.³³

3. Palestinian Foreign Trade and Consolidating the Trade with Israel

The Palestinian foreign trade is linked to the outer world through land crossings only albeit without complete Palestinian control over these crossings, in addition to the lack of any sea or air ports. Despite the agreements for economic cooperation signed between the PA, Jordan and Egypt and which are supposed to open the opportunities for trade with these two neighboring countries, the implementation

of these treaties remains far-fetched. The trade with and via these two countries remained very limited in export and import, while being confined to direct trading with Israel via the crossings, which link the WB and GS with Israel, or through the Israeli ports.

Due to the obstacles facing the Palestinian businessmen in export and import, trading in most cases was made through Israeli dealers to avoid the complicated procedures Israel imposes in the ports. This has resulted in a huge increase in costs to be borne by exporters and importers who have to abandon their activity in many cases. Moreover, Israel has opened the doors for importing consumer goods which are less important for the Palestinian economy, whereas export movement remained limited causing a continuous deficit in the Palestinian trade balance ranging between \$2–3 billion annually.

This Israeli policy depended on keeping the national economy weak in terms of production, ruling out any chance to offset the deficit in the markets except by getting these needs from or through Israel. Accordingly, Israel achieves more benefits at the expense of marginalizing the Palestinian economy and curbing its development. The focus remains on meeting the basic needs of the population and their daily requirements, with a limited job market not to mention the high levels of unemployment. The obstacles facing export in GS persist, even after the end of war on 18/1/2009, where a “total of 20 truckloads of carnation flowers were exported after one year of the military operation vis-à-vis 5500 average annual exported truckloads before closure.”³⁴

The Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of the State of Israel and the PLO remains one of the main obstacles facing foreign trade. In addition, the Israeli authorities require that the goods entering the Palestinian areas meet the Israeli standards including raw material necessary for Palestinian industry. This applies specifically to drugs and materials necessary for their production, which constitutes a major impediment for competitive trade and denies national industries the necessary attention or markets for their products.³⁵

The following table indicates the size of Palestinian foreign trade in selected years during 2000–2006 and it shows to what extent Israel controls the movement of export and import:

Table 17/8: Palestinian Foreign Trade, Selected Years (\$ million)³⁶

Year	2000	2002	2004	2005	2006
Total value of exports	401	240.9	312.7	335.4	366.7
- Total value of exports from the WB	323	208.1	272.8	294.2	332.8
- Total value of exports from the GS	78	32.7	35	41.2	33.9
Total value of imports	2,382	2,033.6	2,373.2	2,666.8	2,758.7
Total value of imports from Israel	1,739	1,117	1,747.9	1,872.9	2,002.2
Total value of exports to Israel	370	216	281.1	290.6	326.6

The following table shows the size of Palestinian foreign trade with the outside world and also with Israel for 2008 and 2009 where the value is rounded to the nearest million dollars.

Table 18/8: Palestinian Foreign Trade 2008–2009 (\$ million)³⁷

Year		2007 (actual)	2008 (actual)	2009 (estimated)
Exports	Total exports of goods	513	529	545*
	Total exports of goods to Israel**	417	476	492
	The ratio of exports of goods to Israel to the total exports of goods (%)	81.3	90	90.3
Imports	Total imports of goods	3,141	3,772	3,960*
	Total Imports of goods from Israel**	2,152	2,584	2,713
	The ratio of imports of goods from Israel to the total imports of goods (%)	68.5	68.5	68.5

* The figures of 2009 reflecting the total exports and imports with the outside world were calculated on the basis of 5% growth rate compared to 2008. This estimate is in line with the growth in the GDP. On the other hand, the exports were estimated at 3% as a continuation of the growth rate between 2007 and 2008.

** Exports to Israel for 2007, 2008 and 2009 were estimated on the basis of the ratio of the average exports to Israel to the average total exports to the outside world over the period 2000–2006. Imports from Israel were estimated on the same basis.

Based on the aforementioned, the basic link between the Palestinian foreign trade and Israel becomes clear with 68.5% for imports and 90% for exports according to the researcher's estimates in 2009. Figures of the PCBS related to foreign trade with world countries in 2008 are close to the estimates of the researcher, where they indicated that imports from Israel accounted for 72% of the total imports

which amounted to \$3,772 million, i.e., \$2,716 million. However, the Center has not yet provided, till the time of writing this report, any specific figures about the exports to Israel in the mentioned year. Nor are there any figures for exports and imports in 2009.³⁸ The Israeli hegemony over the Palestinian economy leads to depriving the Palestinians from freely dealing with international markets and in accordance with the policies of the World Trade Organization (WTO); which gives Israel more advantages and benefits at the expense of the Palestinian side.

4. Reliance on Israel for Sources of Energy

The Palestinians dedicate a high percentage of their income to import energy including oil products as gasoline and gas oil in addition to natural gas and electricity by 20% of total goods imports, which means a rise in imports and an increase in trade balance deficit. Moreover, in GS there is also a dependence on industrial gas oil which is imported from Israel to operate the generators of the only and main electricity generating company in GS. Over the last four years, Israel has diminished the amount of this kind of fuel so that generators generate 65 megawatts compared to 170 megawatts capacity. Then in January 2010, the amount of fuel was further diminished to reach an operating level of 30 megawatts. Generally speaking, petroleum products which Israel has allowed into GS in 2009 were very limited, where only 46% of needed cooking gas was allowed into GS.³⁹ In fact, natural gas was discovered off the coasts of GS after the PA granted rights for oil exploration in that region to British Gas Group (BG Group) and its partner Consolidated Contractors Company (CCC) in return for 10% of profit. However, Israel continues to monopolize this gas and pump it into its lands. This came after Israel capitalized on the international controversy over Hamas's victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections in 2006 to tighten its grip on the gas in the coasts of Gaza ostensibly preventing Hamas from benefiting from its proceeds, let alone signing a contract with BG Group to export it to Israel. This results in depriving the Palestinians of their rights to have access to their legitimate rights to their natural resources and it dedicates Israel's hegemony on these sources. This also leads to an increase in prices of energy the Palestinians have to endure compared to the neighboring countries.⁴⁰

5. Competitive Israeli Goods and Products and Settlement Products

The flow of Israeli products into GS is yet another form of dependency on the Israeli economy as these products easily enter the Palestinian markets and are sold widely and without restrictions, which means that the Arab boycott efforts are not effective. The flow of the Israeli products into the WB and GS refers to the government support, which makes the products' cost low and able to compete with the Palestinian products. Thus, their marketing in the WB and GS is easily facilitated. Under these circumstances, the opportunities open for Palestinian businessmen are diminished so they have to contract with Israeli shipping companies to transfer their goods to the rest of the world. This happens via the crossings with Israel, where the goods are moved to the trucks of the shipping company within complex security procedures, which could be as long as eight hours. These measures lead to the damage of the goods in addition to huge losses for traders and business owners⁴¹. Although Israel regularly promotes in the media that it has introduced improvements as facilitations for the Palestinians, the World Bank notices that nothing has changed regarding freedom of mobility, and accordingly import and export processes.

6. Israel's Control over the Money It Collects on Behalf of the Palestinians

Israel collects taxes and customs duties on the goods which the Palestinians import via the Israeli air and sea ports in a sum that amounts to \$60 million per month. However, Israel has used this money as a means for political pressure and bargain, especially when Hamas was in power from 2006 till mid 2007. Delaying money payment is not the only problem; there is also the arbitrary deduction of this money as a payment of the due Palestinian obligations in return for electricity and water imported from Israel, in addition to the expenses of treating patients among other things. Thus, the delay in disbursement of these funds is used as a means for pressure on the PA, since it depends on them basically to cover its expenses.

Sixth: Foreign Aid and Its Orientation

Foreign aid to the WB and GS has been significantly linked to the PA Reform and Development Plan (PRDP) 2008–2010. This plan essentially aimed at reforming and restructuring the Palestinian institutions and pushing towards comprehensive development, in the wake of the Annapolis Conference and International Donors' Conference for the Palestinian State (Paris Donors' Conference) in 2007.

The PA was keen in 2009 to continue its application of the PRDP. It tried to provide a better investment environment for the private sector and to strengthen its role and participation in the development process, including reforms in the security status and financial system. Donor countries persisted with their policy of providing aid and funds for WB in 2009. They excluded the GS from the reform and development projects since Hamas's victory in the parliamentary elections in January 2006, the increasingly tightened siege on GS after June 2007 and Hamas's control of GS.

1. The Development and Sources of Foreign Aid for the PA in 2008 and 2009

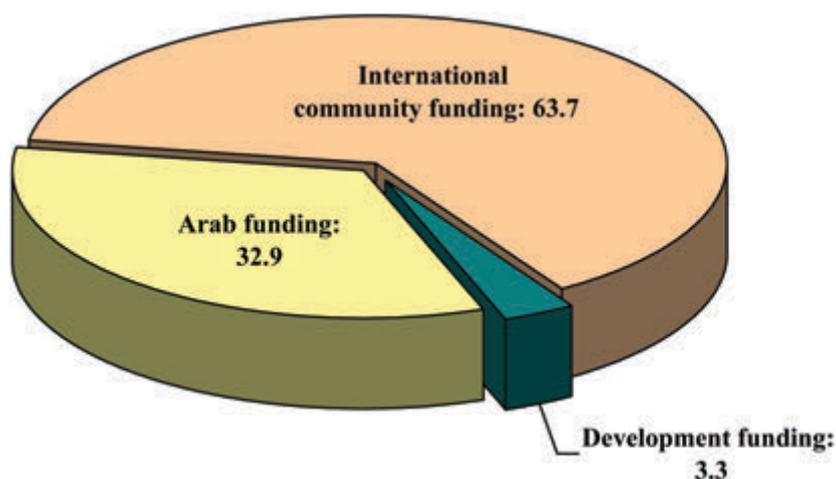
In a continuation of the policy of international support for the PA to build its institutions, the sources of funding in 2009 have been diversified as in the recent years, with the contribution of the Arab countries and the international community. Foreign aid for PA amounted to \$1,401.7 million in 2009 where the Arab countries have contributed by \$461.6 million, PEGASE by \$433.2 million, the USA by \$273.2 million while the World Bank contributed by \$135.1 million (see table 19/8).

Foreign aid for the PA reached \$1,763 million in 2008, including \$1,317 million in the form of international aid and \$446 million Arab funding, whereas it reached around \$1,402 million in 2009. PEGASE and the EU were the major supporters for the PA by \$651 million in 2008, followed by the USA by \$302 million, then the World Bank by \$283 million while the KSA provided \$234 million.

Table 19/8: Sources of Foreign Funding for the PA 2009 (\$ million)⁴²

Year	2009	
	Value	%
Arab funding	461.6	32.9
KSA	241.1	17.2
UAE	173.9	12.4
Algeria	26	1.9
Egypt	17.8	1.3
Oman	2.9	0.2
International community funding	893.3	63.7
PEGASE	433.2	30.9
USA	273.2	19.5
World Bank	135.1	9.6
France	27.7	2
Turkey	10.3	0.7
India	10.1	0.7
Greece	2.7	0.2
Grants for the Ministry of Social Affairs	1.1	0.1
Development funding	46.8	3.3
Total	1,401.7	100

Sources of Foreign Funding for the PA 2009 (%)



Despite the increase in external funding surplus as compared to what was planned in the 2008 budget, by 8%, the year 2009 witnessed deterioration in the funding it received from Arab countries and international organizations with a 20.5% deficit.

2. Planned and Actual External Funding in 2009

The PA received 71.8% of the foreign funding planned and required to cover the deficit in the 2009 budget, by a total of \$1,402 million. The funding mainly targeted the deficit in public expenditure by around \$1,355 million, and by 93.4% of the funding planned and required for this provision. On the other hand, development funding was scarce and 10% less than the funding planned and required in the 2009 budget (see table 20/8).

Table 20/8: Foreign Funding for PA 2009 (\$ million)⁴³

Year	2009		Paid (%)
	Planned	Actual	
Budgetary support	1,450	1,354.9	93.4
Development funding	503	46.8	9.3
Total foreign funding	1,953	1,401.7	71.8

Foreign aid targeted the deficit in expenditure including salaries, wages, and assistance for poor families in addition to basic public services and covering some debts which the PA owes to the private sector. Concerning international monitoring mechanisms, work proceeded through the World Bank PRDP Trust Fund where a part of this support was allocated for the development of public services such as education, health, water and energy.

Development funding received only limited international support due to the non-existence of a clear mechanism and an official policy regarding the work of the developmental arms of donor countries. In most cases these arms directly contract with institutions of civil society and the private sector, without explicitly notifying the Palestinian Finance Ministry about these contracts.

3. The Trends of Foreign Aid and the Developments in the Palestinian Economic Situation

With the beginning of 2009, foreign aid aimed at enhancing trust in the PA and its capacity to keep things under control. Therefore, the funding targeted a set of projects in infrastructure and institutional reform besides private sector support.

Based on the available data, there are positive indicators, for the first time in many years, showing that the GDP per capita grew in 2008 and 2009. Nonetheless, the Israeli occupation and the regulations it imposes still undermine the investors' confidence and limit access to natural resources such as lands of Area C which constitute 60% of the WB, water and communications frequencies.

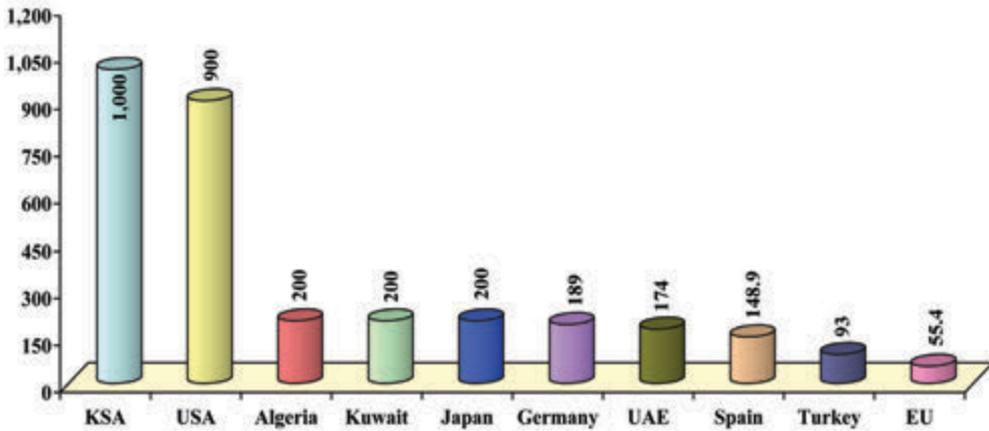
After the 22-day war on GS, which lasted till 18/1/2009, donations to GS targeted contribution to mitigating the repercussions of the Israeli offensive, and pumping more humanitarian aid into the Strip. According to final damage assessments reports after the war on GS, and while the tightened siege continues, many international organizations estimated the accumulated losses at around \$4 billion which is close to the Palestinian GDP.

In order to mobilize the efforts of the donor countries for the reconstruction of GS, an international conference was held in Sharm el-Sheikh in March 2009. Donors approved of the damage and needs assessments as they were presented by the PA in an emergency plan known as the Gaza Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan (GERRP). The donor countries pledged providing \$4.3 billion to carry out this plan in order to rebuild GS and support the Palestinian budget of 2009.

Table 21/8: Pledges at Gaza Conference, Sharm el-Sheikh, 2/3/2009
 (\$ thousand)⁴⁴

Arab donors		European donors		USA and others	
Country	Pledge	Country	Pledge	Country	Pledge
Algeria	200,000	EU	55,440	USA	900,000
		Austria	7,500		
Bahrain	23,000	Belgium	50,000	Japan	200,000
		Denmark	220,000		
Kuwait	200,000	Finland	50,400	South Korea	15,000
		France	37,800		
Lebanon	1,000	Germany	189,000	Australia	12,900
		Greece	5,000		
Morocco	15,000	Ireland	3,250	Brazil	10,000
		Italy	100,000		
Qatar	250,000	Luxembourg	6,260	China	2,200
		Netherlands	170,100		
KSA	1,000,000	Portugal	3,000	India	1,000
		Spain	148,900		
Tunisia	1,300	Sweden	78,900	Singapore	1,000
		Turkey	93,000		
UAE	174,000	UK	30,000	Malaysia	100
		Others	2,534.7		
Sub-total	1,864,300	Sub-total	1,251,084.7	Sub-total	1,142,200
Total	4,257,584.7				

Pledges at Gaza Conference, Sharm el-Sheikh, 2/3/2009, Selected Countries
 (\$ million)



However, the continued siege on GS and the political environment based on the Quartet’s conditions towards Hamas hindered the reconstruction of the battered Strip and directed all the support to the intensified humanitarian aid for the Gazans. In this context, donor countries have formed joint work groups led by the UN organizations with the membership of non-governmental and international organizations, in addition to the establishment of the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) that was formed especially to address the growing humanitarian crisis in the GS. Aid was limited to relief work besides improving humanitarian and essential services such as drainage systems, temporary and emergency housing, some forms of support for the agricultural activity and providing temporary jobs.

In the WB on the other hand, foreign aid has contributed to the development of growth through supporting the budget, institutional reform, developing the relation and partnership between the private and public sectors which might lead to achieving sustainable development in the WB including East Jerusalem.

Seventh: PA Management of the Economic Situation

The government bears a great deal of responsibility towards its people and society to manage the economic activity through its different ministries in the best possible performance. It is the duty of the government to determine the enforceable policies in addition to preparing plans and programs for social and economic development to ensure achieving its goals. It also bears the responsibility of monitoring the implementation of the systems and laws concerning the consumer or the producer. Following is a display of the main aspects of government performance:

1. The Government's Performance to Face the Economic Repercussions of the Continued Palestinian Schism

Despite the lapse of three years since the division, no reconciliation has been achieved till this time. Nor has the government's performance been up to the level of the crisis, which negatively influenced government economic, political and social performance. This led to the crippling of potentials and waste of resources where thousands of citizens earn their salaries without actually practicing their jobs, while there are many missed opportunities due to division. Regardless of who stands behind this impasse, the dangers have their impact on the country and all the citizens.

The instructions of the Palestinian presidency and Fayyad's government regarding public servants in the GS have created an anomalous situation. According to these instructions, employees are not required to go to work except for those working in some ministries and institutions which directly impact the life of the citizens, such as the ministries of health and education besides the governorates and the PCBS. The result was that the PA in Ramallah was paying salaries to those sitting at home while those who went to work were not being paid except for the exceptions it specified. According to statistics by PECDAR, the number of the employees in the GS amounts to 78 thousand including 31,350 military men and 45,650 civilians, where the number of those who go to work is 17,750 employees by 22.7%, most of whom work in the Ministry of Education (12,300 employees) and the Ministry of Health (5,000 employees). In addition, the salaries and wages paid represent 14.2% of total salaries paid to the PA employees in GS, which means that 86% of total salaries which the PA pays goes to those sitting at home, who complied or had to comply with its decisions,

i.e., \$386 million were being paid without any production or services in return.⁴⁵ News and reports from human rights institutions showed that there are many employees who were denied their salaries for political reasons including lots of employees from the ministries of health and education. According to a report for Al Mezan Center for Human Rights published in April 2008, the salaries of 3,615 employees were cut including 1,549 from the Ministry of Health and 693 from the Ministry of Education.⁴⁶

2. The Government's Performance to Provide Employment and Curb Unemployment

The high percentage of unemployment in WB and GS was and is still the most dangerous socio-economic dilemma, and the challenge which has faced the PA and its partners since 2000 till now. The high level of unemployment among the youths represents a major threat to the National Project since it forced them to leave their country in search for a job. This unemployment in its turn needs high investments and favorable investment climate.

The high level of unemployment in Palestine and its persistence over time especially at the end of 2000 in the wake of the outburst of *al-Aqsa Intifadah* has been coupled with a short vision despite the PA's awareness of the problem and its seriousness. In this sense, the government did not pursue clear employment policies to solve this problem which has been associated with the economic blockade and Israeli hindrances besides rationing work inside Israel and the settlements.

In fact, there were two tracks the government pursued in tackling the problem of unemployment, the first is represented in expanding public sector jobs to accommodate the highest number of job seekers especially university graduates. The second track aimed at the implementation of temporary operational programs which depend on foreign aid without allocating specific investments to permanent jobs, which yielded a limited effect only. This comes despite the persistent efforts to encourage investments through international conferences held in the cities of Bethlehem and Nablus in 2008 with an intense Arab presence.

Among the efforts to limit unemployment levels was the foundation of the Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection and the Partners for Temporary Employment in the Private Sector.⁴⁷

3. The Government's Performance in Dealing with the Housing Problem

The demand on housing will increase in the Palestinian regions in the next 10 years by around 400–450 thousand residential units, i.e., by an annual average ranging between 40 and 50 thousand units, whereas the residential units available currently do not exceed 16 thousand. Thus, there is a significant deficit in the housing sector, which comprises a major challenge to the government.

In response to the needs of those living on limited income for housing units, the Palestinian Investment Fund has prepared plans for the next five years to establish 20–30 thousand residential units for people with low income, in addition to other projects such as building a new residential city called Rawabi. These projects do not only need funding but also require that the government adopt a reform program to support mortgage finance and develop regulations to protect borrowers besides other regulations.⁴⁸

4. The Government's Performance in Price Control

Tracing the indices of prices of commodities and services, the general trend seems to be clearly heading towards increasing the prices of many essential goods including water, medicine and different kinds of food such as grains, oil, sugar, meat, fish and dairy products among others. This leads to increasing the burden on the consumers in poor and middle classes, especially in the light of the decrease in wages as compared to the increase in unemployment levels and the increased number of families living under poverty line. Thus, the actual income is decreasing and the gap between the poor and the rich increasing. It is obvious also that the government grants the right to monopolizing a set of essential goods for some traders, which contributes to the continuous increase in their prices. Needless to say, activating means to control prices of goods, especially the basic ones, is one indicator of the government's success, and this did not happen.

5. The Government's Performance in Combating Expired Goods

Given the eagerness of some traders to gain high profits in every possible way, these traders do not hesitate to sell expired food commodities, which leads to substantial health problems. This was revealed by the campaigns of the Consumer Protection Department in the Ministry of National Economy which disposed these food commodities and transferred the traders to the judicial

authorities. Given the greed of some merchants and their pursuit of the highest profits which make them store these goods to raise their prices, there is a general demand that commodities be subjected to laboratory tests to verify their period of validity and consistency with international and Palestinian standards prior to distribution.

6. The Government's Performance in Solving Cash Liquidity Crisis, Especially in GS

The Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA) has not yet issued Palestinian national currency awaiting the declaration of the Palestinian state. Thus, Palestinians continue to deal with different currencies: the US dollar, the Jordanian dinar and the Israeli shekel in accordance with what was regulated in the Paris Protocol. Consequently, PMA could not determine a monetary policy for the country in the absence of control over these currencies which remained in circulation according to the exchange rates in the market.

The Israeli siege on GS expanded to include dollar and even shekel transfers, thus the banks failed to provide the needed currency. This paved the way for the emergence of an official market for these currencies, in which the banks deal, and another one for money-changers. What exacerbated the cash liquidity crisis was the dollar leakage to the outside to cover the prices of goods imported through underground tunnels which link the two border cities of Rafah.

In the light of dollar shortage and the urge to get currency in Israeli shekel, dealers suffer a loss which amounts up to 5% of their money that is wasted in the form of commissions and currency exchange difference. Small borrowers also have to bear this amount of loss at the time when their activity is limited and their profits are marginal. This means that the microfinance sector, where women constitute around 48% of its activity, faces additional pressure.

In the light of the tight siege and the current schism, banks are unable to act or pose appropriate solutions. The same applies to the PMA especially that these conditions cast their shadow on various aspects of the financial and business sectors.

Eighth: The Siege and Repercussions of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict on the Economic Situation

The continuous Israeli occupation of the WB and GS and its practices there had its repercussions on the Palestinian economy starting with economic dependency and ending with the weak economic growth, if it was achieved in the first place. Some forms of these practices are the Israeli punitive measures including the crippling siege of GS and the continuous incursions in the WB besides the continuous existence of settlements and the separation wall.

The Israeli mass punitive measures continued throughout 2009. There were marginal steps to ease the restrictions on the movement in WB, where more of the 1948 occupied territories Arabs were allowed reach the markets of the WB as in Nablus and Tulkarm. This led to revitalizing local markets and achieving some economic recovery there. These developments helped in the relative increase of the investors’ confidence and of the economic growth in the WB. However, reaching the markets outside the WB, whether in GS or Israel or any other place in the world, is still very limited.

According to the preliminary statistics of the specialized committees mandated by the Ministry of Planning in the GS, the total estimate of losses of the Palestinian economy due to the Israeli aggression on GS (27/12/2008–18/1/2009) amounted to \$2.734 billion (see table 22/8).

Table 22/8: Total Losses of the Palestinian Economy, Ministry of Planning—Gaza (\$ million)⁴⁹

Category	Estimated losses
Direct losses	1,704
Indirect losses	214
Lost-opportunity losses	287
Funding of emergency relief programs	529
Total losses	2,734

Displaying direct losses reveals that the construction sector was the primary affected sector where the losses accounted for 51.4%, followed by the agricultural sector with 12.8% of the total direct losses (see table 23/8).

The European Network of Implementing Development Agencies (EUNIDA) has issued a report on the losses of the various sectors during the war on GS. More than 40% of losses were of those of the productive economic sectors, and these were done in an intentional and systematic way. It included the industrial, commercial and agricultural facilities in the GS. The total damage was estimated by EUNIDA and reported by the GERRP, where the latter reported that the total damages amounted to \$892 million (see table 24/8).

Table 23/8: Distribution of Direct Losses by Sector, Ministry of Planning—Gaza (\$ million)⁵⁰

Sector	Size of losses	%
Industry	240	14.1
Trade	50	2.9
Agricultural	218.2	12.8
Tourism	6.7	0.4
Energy	23.4	1.4
Water	6.5	0.4
Construction (public buildings and houses)	876.1	51.4
Roads and ports	173	10.2
Media	5.4	0.3
Telecommunications	3.9	0.2
Environment	100.5	5.9
Total	1,703.7	100

Table 24/8: Estimates of the Costs of Reconstruction of GS According to the PA's GERRP and EUNIDA (\$ million)⁵¹

Sector	GERRP estimates	EUNIDA estimates
Rubble removal and UXO/UXB clearance*	6	6
Transport	115.9	28.8
Water, waste water and solid waste	6.7	6.7
Energy	10.5	10.5
Telecommunications	13.1	4.1
Housing	347.9	291.1
Public buildings	71	46.5
Private sector	140	140
Agriculture	180.7	125.6
Total	891.8	659.3

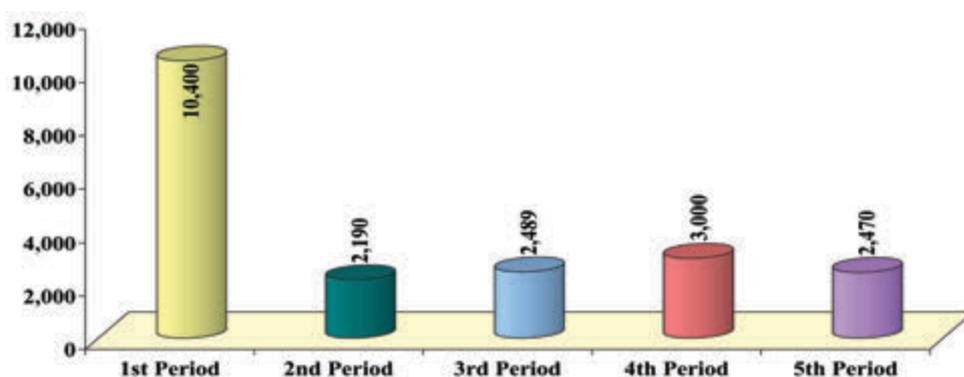
* Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) and Unexploded Bomb (UXB).

After the Israeli war on GS the siege persisted in the form of closing all commercial crossings from and to the GS, except for humanitarian aid and some essential needs through Karm Abu Salim crossing to the south of GS, and grains and animal feeds through al-Mentar (*Karni*) crossing besides allowing the limited export of some agricultural products. This siege had many economic repercussions, notably: ignoring the reconstruction of what was destroyed by the Israeli war machine, preventing the import of materials necessary for building and reconstruction and those that meet the needs of the population growth in GS, such as housing, health and educational facilities, in addition to the prevention of primary materials needed to operate industrial facilities. This aggravated the crisis of the production sector and the cumulative losses of the national economy that follow. Exceptionally, and under international pressure, Israel allowed the passage of 20 trucks carrying glass panes at the end of 2009 for humanitarian purposes to protect the damaged houses from cold and harsh winter.

Table 25/8: Comparison of Average Monthly Imports Through GS Crossings During Different Periods⁵²

Time Period		Number of trucks
1st Period	Monthly average 2005–2007	10,400
2nd Period	July 2007–June 2008	2,190
3rd Period	July 2008–December 2008	2,489
4th Period	During war (27/12/2008–18/1/2009)	3,000
5th Period	Post war (19/1/2009–December 2009)	2,470

Comparison of Average Monthly Imports Through GS Crossings During Different Periods (Number of Trucks)



Regarding the siege and its most important economic consequences in 2009, exports movement was limited and almost restricted to some agricultural products such as carnation flower and strawberries, while allowing the import of a very limited list of materials for humanitarian purposes not exceeding 72 commodities out of 4,000⁵³ which used to be imported before the siege was imposed.

The decline in trade between the WB and GS is yet another form of the punitive measures imposed by the Israeli authorities. A recent study by the Palestinian Federation of Industries showed that the size of losses caused by the closure and by not allowing the transfer of commodities from the industrial facilities in the northern governorates to the south exceeded \$42 million. On the other hand, the losses, due to prevention of export from GS to the WB, have exceeded \$12 million per annum. This caused the facilities to search for alternative products most of which came from the Israeli market or via Israeli ports, or through tunnels on the southern borders of GS, in addition to the search for new markets for the products.⁵⁴

The year 2009 witnessed a shift from commodity to service activities as a result of the continued Israeli siege and the closure of the crossings in GS, besides the limited movement of commodities and individuals in the WB due to the checkpoints and persistent building of the Separation Wall there. A recent study funded by the German foundation Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung showed an increased growth in the services sector at the expense of traditional activities, especially in the GS. This sector which includes information technology, telecommunications and consultancy services bypasses the closed crossings. This sector mainly depends on human resources in addition to modern techniques to present these services through creative means by using the World Wide Web and the internet.

Ninth: Future Prospects for the Palestinian Economy

1. The Symbiotic Link Between Politics and Economy

There is a major overlap between political and economic considerations in Palestine where they mutually affect each other. Thus, the economic situation in Palestine is closely linked to the political situation due to the continuing conflict. Tracing the current political situation shows that nothing is clear about the political future despite setting a deadline from time to time since the Oslo Accords, besides the efforts to conclude a final settlement are still ineffective.

The Israeli closure regime has stymied the development of the Palestinian private sector, a key condition for aid to catalyze sustainable economic development.⁵⁵ Consequently, any breakthrough in the Palestinian economic growth, in the near future, or substantial improvement seems unlikely. Thus, the track closest to reality is the continuation of the current political situation without any substantive change since the Separation Wall is still there, building and expansion of settlements have not stopped in addition to the relentless Judaization of East Jerusalem.

2. The Purpose of Establishing Statehood and Ending the Occupation in Two Years

Within the frame of defining the interventions of absolute importance which assume a foremost position among the aspirations of Fayyad's government in Ramallah, the government's program for 2010 was announced in August 2009. It includes mobilizing the national efforts of the Palestinian society and the efforts of

friends in the international community to assert the necessity of standing against the Israeli occupation and establishing the Palestinian state within two years. Yet the possibility of the success of this step remains unclear, given that Israel has the final say with respect to compliance.

3. The Odds of Implementing PRDP 2008–2010 and the General National Plan of 2011–2013

This national plan is prepared for 2011–2013 to be adopted as an extension of PRDP, the three-year fiscal plan which was implemented in 2008–2010, while filling its gaps and introducing any amendments deemed necessary. Thus, there is an importance in the new planning approach which “seeks to link policies to planning as well as planning to budget preparation. The approach also integrates recurrent and development budgets into one budget and shifts from budgeting on a line item basis to programme-based budgeting.”⁵⁶

Moreover, completing the PRDP in 2010 remains linked to the continued foreign aid which is mostly used to cover the budget deficit, while a limited part goes to development projects. This support is exceptional and limited and might stop at any time, which will affect the implementation of this plan when the support is cut.

Accordingly, we expect that any chances to correct essential economic indicators would be limited and within a narrow framework, especially with the decline in the economic growth, the high levels of unemployment rates, high rates of poverty and the gap between the rich and the poor together with the unfair distribution of income and wealth. In addition, there are the factors of increase in total consumption, the weak investment, and the decrease in savings. Therefore it is expected that the destitution perseveres and even extends to new segments of the society especially in the light of high prices.

4. Suggested Prospects to Alleviate the Crisis of the Palestinian Economy

In order to mitigate the difficult conditions of the Palestinian economy where all political, economic and social considerations overlap, whether on the external or internal level, there is a dire need to find non-traditional methods that help alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian economy and the Palestinians. At the same time, these methods must work in a systematic way towards reforming the structural distortions that resulted from dependency on the Israeli economy,⁵⁷ including:

a. Opening up to International Markets through Innovative Ways

There is a big potential to open up to Arab, regional and international markets, especially in the services domain. This domain could bypass the restrictions imposed on the crossings and the current economic siege, through innovative methods provided by new technology through the use of the World Wide Web. This is even more possible if we take into consideration that Palestinian institutions have various and promising capabilities in the field of information technology. This should lead to an improvement in this field which is able to absorb a large number of university graduates specialized in these services and this in its turn would contribute to economic growth besides increasing the revenues of services exports thereby improving the Palestinian services balance with the outside world.

b. Maximizing the Use of Palestinian Capacities in the Diaspora

In the light of the continuous increase in the number of Palestinians and their spread at home and Diaspora where they amounted to 10.88 million expatriates at the end of 2009, including 5.63 million living in Diaspora which amounts to 51.8% of the total population,⁵⁸ there is a big chance to benefit from these human capacities which include high qualifications in different professions and specializations. They would serve the national economy whether through transferring money to their families at home or dedicating a part of their savings to invest in safe local projects. In addition, their increased demand on the Palestinian traditional and nontraditional commodities should contribute to increasing the industrial and agricultural production in Palestine besides increasing exports revenues.

c. Benefiting from the Palestinian Surplus Funds in Diaspora

Despite the difficulties in providing a favorable economic climate and the efforts to rectify this climate through conferences to encourage investment, it is advisable to benefit from the surplus of funds from Palestinian expatriates. They could establish joint projects with countries that seek to attract these investments. Indeed, there are many countries which followed this track through the establishment of sovereign funds capable of attracting the necessary investments. These would finance agricultural projects that contribute to achieving food security for involved countries at reasonable prices. Hence, the investments would help them face the increase in the price of grains in particular and food in general.

d. Exerting the Effort to Enhance Economic Activity to Create a Reliable, Trustworthy Investment Climate

The attempt to enhance investment in the WB and the GS requires, among other things, providing the local and foreign investors with a transparent, effective and trustworthy legal framework, in addition to depending on different forms of government support to provide the necessary facilitations besides risk-sharing. Indeed, the limits of these investments exceed the material aspects in as much as they contribute to helping the Palestinian individual hold on to his land and face the Israeli projects. These projects aim at tightening the noose on the Palestinians through different methods to force them to leave their homeland.⁵⁹ In addition, looking forwards to encouraging investment at the current time through the preparation for an international conference to be held in Bethlehem in May 2010, as an extension to the recent conferences held at home and abroad, represents the determination of the PA to intensify local, regional and international investment in Palestine, and the full belief in the feasibility of activating the investment activity.

Conclusion

The Palestinian economy in WB and GS still suffers the policies and practices of the Israeli occupation which is keen at keeping the Palestinian economy under its control in order to enjoy the profits that result from these practices. These practices include, but are not limited to, the isolation of the Palestinian economy from the Arab and international worlds alike, limiting the scope of these dealings and making the Palestinian economy subordinate to the Israeli economy as the only available and possible choice.

In addition, the Palestinian economy continues to suffer from closing the crossings and the siege imposed on the GS since more than two years, besides the political, social and economic separation between the WB and GS not to mention the complete isolation of GS from the outer world. All this resulted in major negative effects including the decrease in trade size, the deterioration of living standards, increase in prices and poverty and the level of unemployment.

Although the GDP of the WB and GS has achieved a growth by 5% in 2009, thus representing a positive trend, its dependence on foreign aid and the high levels of unemployment mean that it does not necessarily indicate a positive growth.

In light of the current situation represented in the limited chances of a political solution, besides the Israeli practices that curb the Palestinian economic activity, the chances for genuine economic growth or rectification of the track of this growth in the near future seem unlikely. This is true especially with the restrictions imposed on the movement of commodities and individuals in different Palestinian regions, in addition to the economic siege still imposed on GS.

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1. Mohsen M. Saleh and Basheer M. Nafi, editors, *al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-Filastini li Sanat 2005* (The Palestinian Strategic Report 2005), 2006.
2. Mohsen M. Saleh, editor, *al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-Filastini li Sanat 2006* (The Palestinian Strategic Report 2006), 2007.
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5. Mohsen M. Saleh, editor, *al-Taqrir al-Istratiji al-Filastini li Sanat 2009* (The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009), 2010.
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9. Wael Sa'ad, *al-Hisar: Dirasah Hawla Hisar al-Sha'b al-Filastini wa Muhawalat Isqat Hukumat Hamas* (The Siege: A Study on the Siege of the Palestinian People & Attempts to Overthrow the Government of Hamas), 2006.
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This Report

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10 is the fifth in a series of annual resourceful scientific studies. It discusses the developments of the Palestinian issue in this period, in an objective and comprehensive manner. The meticulous analytical reading of events tries also to foresee the future. This Report has become a basic reference in Palestinian studies, it is a must to all those concerned.

An outstanding team of 14 academics and experts contributed to this Report in eight chapters. They covered the internal Palestinian situation, the Israeli scene and the Israeli-Palestinian relations, the Arab, Muslim and international stances toward the Palestinian issue. This Report focuses also on the issue of Jerusalem and the holy sites, whereas, the demographic and economic indicators are studied and analyzed in two separate chapters.

Undoubtedly, this Report is a serious addition to the field of Palestinian studies.

The Palestinian Strategic Report 2009/10



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